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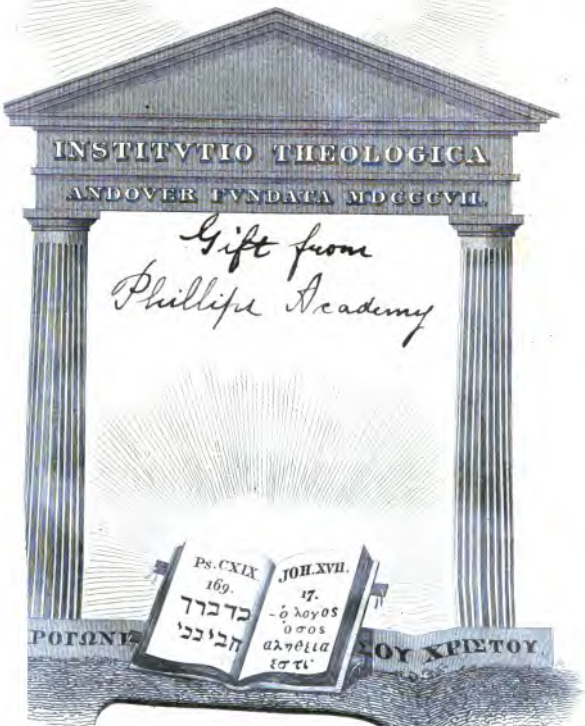

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PRECIOUS TRUTH;

OR

SOME POINTS IN GOSPEL DOCTRINE,

VINDICATED

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

CHRISTIANS OF EVERY DENOMINATION;

SHEWING THE FALSEHOOD OF THE CHARGES

BROUGHT AGAINST THE WRITINGS OF

MR. MARSHAL, MR. HERVEY, AND OTHERS,

BY MR. BELLAMY,

IN HIS DIALOGUES AND LETTERS.

BY THE REV. JOHN ANDERSON,
MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATIONS OF
SERVICE AND KING'S CREEK.

Buy the truth and sell it not.—Prov. xxiii. 23.
Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints.—Jude

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY,

A SERMON.

PITTSBURGH,
FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL AND LITERARY
PRESS OF ZADOK CRAMER.

1806.

621
Bellamy

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SOME POINTS

OF

GOSPEL-DOCTRINE

VINDICATED.

LETTER I.

On the opposition to the purity of Gospel-doctrine.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THERE is hardly any revealed truth which has not been openly contradicted or secretly undermined by one or other of the numerous errors which have troubled the church of God. But of all the parts of our holy religion none has been opposed under more plausible pretences, or with more uniform and unabated malignity, than the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ without the works of the law. This opposition was as early as the murderous envy of Cain. The apostle tells us, that *by faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.* Abel's faith, no doubt, respected the promise which had been given to our first parents concerning salvation by the seed of the woman. Hence it appears that Cain, whose offering was rejected for his want of that faith, was an enemy to the doctrine

of salvation by grace through faith. That the opinion of self-righteousness prevailed amongst the Israelites in the days of Moses, is evident from his caveat against it in the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy. *Not for thy righteousness*, says he to Israel, *or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess the land.* A legal temper was the ruin of the Jews in the time of Christ and his apostles. *Israel, who followed after righteousness, did not attain to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith; but, as it were, by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone. They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God**. The New Testament church, as soon as it was erected, began to be troubled with legal doctrine. To set forth the danger of that leaven is the principal design of Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians. He shews, in these epistles, that the righteousness, for which alone we are justified, is not to be procured by our performance of any work or by our attainment of any good qualification as the condition of our interest in it; but to be received as the free gift of divine grace through faith. Hence it is called *the righteousness which is of faith;* and which God *imputes to us without works*†.

After the times of the Apostles, the opposition to the doctrine of free grace continued and increased; but did not come to a remarkable height, till the beginning of the fifth century, when Pelagius rose. He openly denied the doctrine of the victorious work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling; with which doctrine that of

* Deut. ix. 5. Rom ix. 30, 31, 32. x. 3.
† Rom. ix. 30. iv. 6.

justification by free grace through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is closely connected. Though his errors were well refuted, particularly by Augustine, and also condemned by several councils; yet they were never eradicated; but, in one form or another, were still maintained and propagated by many. When the Papal Antichrist attained his height, the doctrine of justification by man's works or inherent righteousness was the principal of his abominations: it was the head and heart of Popery. Still, however, even in the darkest periods, there were witnesses against this error: Some of them, such as Bernard and Anselm, in the communion of the church of Rome; and others, who departed from that most impure communion, such as, the Waldenses, Wickliffe, Hus. But in the sixteenth century, the scripture-doctrine of justification through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus imputed to us and received by faith alone, began to shine forth with such a peculiar splendor, as had never been known before from the times of the Apostles. In the preface to the *Syntagma Confessionum*, or Collection of the Confessions of the Reformed churches, it is observed, that all these Confessions teach the same doctrine concerning the justification of a sinner before God; a doctrine, which is the very life and soul of the Christian religion; and which our first reformers, such as Luther, Calvin, Beza, delivered, just as they found it in the holy scriptures. It would have been happy for the Protestant churches, if their public teachers had satisfied themselves with that simplicity, and had not attempted in various ways to corrupt this article, in order to render it more palatable to a carnal, self-conceited generation of professors. There are, in general, three ways in which the doctrine of the reformation has been deserted. First, instead of teaching, with our old reformers, that the righteous-

ness of Christ is our only justifying righteousnes; some have taught, that God, for Christ's sake, will accept our own sincere, though imperfect obedience, as our justifying righteousness. Secondly, there are some, who, though they allow the righteousness of Christ to be our justifying righteousness, yet maintain that our actual justification by it is not received by faith alone, but procured by our performance of the conditions of faith, repentance and sincere obedience. Thirdly, however much these legal preachers differ otherwise among themselves in their accounts of the manner in which we obtain justification before God, they all agree in disapproving the definition of saving faith delivered by our reformers, as a fiducial reliance on Christ crucified, or on the free promise of the gospel in him, for our own everlasting salvation, and in representing true faith as our willingness to comply with certain terms or conditions upon which, according to them, salvation is offered.

These pretended improvements, but real corruptions, of the doctrine of the reformation were zealously opposed by Messrs. Marshall, Boston, Ralph and Ebenezar Erskine, Hervey, Gelatly and others, who were convinced that the old Protestant doctrine concerning justification by faith alone, the free access of sinners to Christ, and the nature of saving faith, was the same which had been taught by the Prophets and Apostles. No human writings are absolutely faultless; but it may be safely asserted that there are few equally intitled, with the writings of the Divines now mentioned, to the commendation of having represented the doctrines of the Bible in their native simplicity, free from the mixture of preconceived opinions. Nor is the the testimony, which these writings have obtained, of the spiritual

savour and usefulness to the souls of the Lord's people, to be overlooked. *My sheep*, says Christ, *know my voice: a stranger will they not follow; but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Such are the writings attacked by Mr. Bellamy in his Dialogues and Letters. Considering how much his performance, reprinted of late, and highly recommended by many teachers in our Israel, tends to perplex and unsettle the minds of church-members with regard to several precious truths of the gospel, the writer of the following letters was led to believe, that an essay to illustrate these truths, and to vindicate them from the misrepresentations of Mr. Bellamy and others, would be seasonable, and, through the Divine blessing, useful.

In a Postscript to Mr. Bellamy's Advertisement, we have the following words: "It will be an abuse "upon the publisher of this piece to suppose it in his "intention, to detract from the character of such wor- "thy men as Mr. Hervey and Mr. Marshal, or to hin- "der the perusal of their writings." One can hardly forbear remarking upon these words, that this pretended abuse seems unavoidable by a reader of Mr. Bellamy's work. For the errors, with which he charges Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey, are not only some unguarded expressions or inadvertent mistakes; but a variety of doctrines, connected with one another, which manifestly run through their writings in general, and which it is the professed design of a great part of them to establish. Nor, according to Mr. Bellamy, are they trivial errors, but most pernicious. He represents the faith inculcated by these writers, as "the first-born of "delusion;" a faith, which, "having no support from "scripture, sense, or reason, is founded wholly in a

" heated imagination." He tells us, that their doctrine teaches men to " hate the Divine law:" that it is " An- " tinomian delusion, leading to infidelity and atheism."

If these charges be well founded, it must be a good work indeed to hinder the perusal of the writings of Messrs. Marshal and Hervey. On the other hand, if they be false, such horrid blasphemy ought to be rebuked; injured truth vindicated; and a just commendation given to those communications of the faithful servants of Jesus Christ which are good to the use of edifying, and which have often, through the Divine blessing, ministered grace to the readers and hearers.

LETTER II.

On the appropriation which is in the nature of saving-faith.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

Mr. Bellamy inveighs with great severity against Mr. Marshal, Mr. Hervey and others, for teaching, that the language of the direct act of faith is to this purpose, I believe, upon the footing of the gospel-promise, " that " the Lord Christ is my saviour, and that I shall have " life through his name: that the Lord is my God in " Christ, my light and my salvation." Persons, according to him, cannot use such expressions, without presumption, till they have found by self-examination the sincerity of their faith and repentance. Such, he allows, was the language of assurance commonly used by the saints recorded in scripture. But then, says he,

" they had sufficient evidence of their good state by " their sanctification. This was their evidence: they knew no other."

Mr. Bellamy's opinon, then, on supposition that it is contradictory to that of Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey, (and to say that it is not so, is to charge Mr. Bellamy with gross calumny) must be, that no person, without reflection on his good qualifications or inherent righteousness, can have any well grounded belief, that Jesus Christ is his own saviour.

In order to form a right judgment of this matter, we must attend carefully to the representation which the holy scripture gives of saving faith, as distinguished from the other graces of the spirit. In the first place, it may be observed, that the words by which *faith* is expressed in the languages, wherein the scripture was first written, are such as certainly imply *persuasion*. Mr. Bellamy ought to have taken notice of what is urged to this purpose by the authors whose doctrine he undertakes to confute. "This notion," says one of these authors, "of assurance or persuasion in " faith is so agreeable to the nature of the thing called " *believing*, and to the style of the holy scriptures, that " sometimes when the original text reads faith or be- " lieving, we read in our translation assurance, accord- " ing to the genuine sense of the original phrase; Acts " xvii. 31. *Whereof he hath given assurance to all men* " *that he hath raised him from the dead;* in the original " *faith*, as is noted in the margin of our Bibles. Deut. " xxviii. 66. *Thou shalt have none assurance of thy life;* " in the original, *Thou shalt not believe in thy life.* This " observation shews, that to believe, in the style of the " holy scriptures, as well as in the common usage of

" mankind in all other matters, is to be assured or per-
" suaded, namely, according to the measure of such
" believing*." " Budœus and Stephens," says Mr. Hervey, " derive the Greek word rendered faith from ano-
" ther word in that language, which signifies, He is per-
" suaded: and I think they do so very properly; for,
" whatever we believe, of that we have a real persua-
" sion. The interpretation which Stephens, one of the
" most accurate critics in the Greek language, gives of
" the word in the New Testament, rendered *faith*, is,
" that it is a persuasion, which the holy spirit works in
" us, of salvation promised in Christ, which a person
" applies to himself in believing." George Pasor, in his Lexicon for the New Testament, observes, concerning the word rendered to believe, " That in profane au-
" thors, it is used for trusting, depending, placing con-
" fidence in a person or thing. He who believes in Jesus
" Christ, holds him not only to be the saviour of the elect,
" but his own saviour, placing all his hope and confidence
" in him. Whosoever does not adhere to Jesus Christ
" by faith and to God in him, remains in the kingdom
" of Satan, and is spiritually dead."

In the second place, it may be observed, that a real persuasion of our warrant to rest on Jesus Christ as our own saviour, not only belongs to the nature of saving faith, but serves to distinguish it from the other graces of the spirit. Mr. Bellamy himself allows, " that there is in saving faith an entire dependance for
" acceptance with God on the free grace of God
" through Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the written
" word†." It is true, he, at the same time, sets this *dependance* in opposition to the *confidence* which Mr.

* Mr. Boston's notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity, Chap. ii. Sect. 3.

† Dialogue ii. page 80.

Marshal and others put in their definition of saving faith. But Mr. Bellamy had no warrant from the holy scriptures to represent these expressions as opposite to one another. On the contrary, believing and trusting, faith and confidence, are used indifferently for one another. Thus, *confiding* or *trusting*, in Ps. ii. 12. is parallel to *believing* in Mark xvi. 16. What we are exhorted to in Prov. iii. 5. *Confide or trust in the Lord with all thine heart*; is parallel to that which is affirmed in Rom. x. 10. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* In Ps. lxxviii. 2. believing in God is explained by trusting in his salvation. Believing is expressed in other places by relying, staying, leaning on the Lord, 2 Chron. xiii. 18. and xvi. 7. Isai. l. 10. Song viii. 5. As fear and doubting are opposed to confidence, so they are to believing, Mark v. 36 *Be not afraid, only believe.*

Knowledge, or some competent understanding of the truths of the gospel, and *a speculative assent* to these truths, belong to historical and temporary faith, as well as to saving faith*. It requires, therefore, something

* The design of these letters is not to treat of every thing supposed or implied in saving faith; but chiefly to explain and vindicate the truth on this head so far as appears necessary to obviate Mr. Bellamy's objections. It may, however, be of use to observe, that, besides a deep and abiding conviction of our sinfulness, misery and inability to help ourselves, there is a spiritual illumination necessary to our believing in Christ, according to these remarkable words of the Lord Jesus, in John vi. 42. *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.* The evidence, on which saving faith proceeds, is called our *seeing the Son*; because it is most certain and infallible. The knowledge of Christ, which is supposed and implied in saving faith, is not the knowledge of an uncertain report; but of the testimony of God, who cannot lie. Nor is it an imaginary idea of Christ as man. To regard such an idea as a representation of the object of our faith is to take up with an idol instead of the true Christ; and it is not the holy spirit of God, but Satan, that leads any to al-

else to constitute the faith of God's elect. Some judicious divines have said, that a cordial approbation of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, is the true spiritual notion of justifying faith. And it is certain, that such an approbation

low themselves or countenance others in such idolatry. A gross error in this respect is most judiciously confuted in *a treatise on mental images*, or *faith no fancy*, by Mr. Ralph Erskine. Nor is it a merely rational knowledge or conviction of Christ's being the true Messiah founded on the historical evidence of the miraculous facts recorded in the New Testament; but a supernatural knowledge, which the Holy Spirit gives us by enlightening the eyes of our understanding to apprehend the authority and faithfulness of God, shining in the light of his own word, particularly in the testimony which he hath given concerning his Son Jesus Christ. He gives us *an understanding to know him that is true;* to know that he, whom we contemplate, is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. See this point well illustrated and established by Mr. Halliburton in his *essay concerning the nature of faith;* annexed to his *Rational Inquiry into the principles of the Deists.* The knowledge which believers have of Christ is certain; though it be, as yet, in a small measure. They see through a glass darkly; yet they know that the object seen is the Lord Christ and no other. Though the light of the sun, which is let in through the narrow window of a prison, be small; yet the discovery that it gives of objects is real, and no deception. So the view that believers obtain by spiritual illumination of the reconciled face of God in Christ is a just view; and none, that are favored with it, shall ever find themselves deceived. It is true, they often doubt, whether the view which they have of Christ, be of a spiritual and saving nature, and are sensible of nothing but darkness and inability to discern the object according to their desire. But their view of Christ is abiding; it becomes clearer by degrees; till it overcomes the remaining darkness. By this view, Christ is spiritually discerned in his glory and suitableness to their case; as their righteousness and salvation; as the glory of their strength; as the true bread which God the Father giveth them from heaven. We may farther observe, that although the seeing of the Son be, in the order of nature, before believing on him; yet the former cannot be separated from the latter. Nay, they are not to be considered as different acts; but as included in one and the same act of saving faith. Hence that act is expressed in some places of scripture by seeing or beholding Christ, or by looking to him. Heb. ii. 9. John i. 23. Isai. xlv. 22.

is always included in the exercise of saving faith: yet it may be questioned, whether our approbation of God's way of saving sinners, exclusive of an application of his salvation to ourselves, will sufficiently characterize true faith or distinguish it from every other gracious or spiritual exercise; since it is obvious, that the notion of believing or trusting in a person or thing is different from that of approving that person or thing. Besides, it is evident, that any holy rational creature, such as an angel, must approve of God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ; though his case neither requires nor admits the same faith or dependance on that salvation with the case of sinners. Nor is faith, formally considered, our turning from sin to God; which, under the name of repentance, is properly distinguished from faith, in our Shorter Catechism. The saving graces, which the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of true Christians, are inseparable; yet he teacheth us to distinguish them from one another. He teacheth us particularly to distinguish saving faith from all the other graces by the peculiar designations he gives it and by the peculiar office he assigns to it. He calls it our receiving the testimony of God concerning his Son, our coming to Christ, our leaning on him. He assigns to faith, and not to love, repentance or any other grace, the office of receiving the righteousness of Christ for our justification. The simple account, which our old Reformers used to give, of the formal nature of saving faith, however much despised by their Popish adversaries or by degenerate Protestants, was scriptural, and served well to distinguish faith from every other gracious act or habit. The formal nature of saving faith, according to them, is a sure trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, or a fiducial dependance on him for all our salvation; a trust, that he is and will be our atoning and interceding high priest, our teaching

prophet, our sin-subduing king. The Psalmist speaks the language of this faith, when he says, *The Lord is my high tower and my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I trust;* that is, as Mr. Hervey justly observes, "Of this I am persuaded; and therefore I trust in "him! or thus I believe, and, in so doing, I trust in "him."

Thus, when the writers, whom Mr. Bellamy opposes, spoke of our having a real persuasion "that Christ is "ours," they meant no more than a fiducial dependance on the Lord Jesus Christ for all our salvation. Indeed, such a persuasion cannot well be denied to be the native import of this dependance. When we trust in a person, or depend on him for doing us a favour, we are persuaded that he will do it. Nor have we any more dependance on him, than we have of this persuasion.

Mr. Marshal proves, that by saving faith we appropriate Christ to ourselves as our own saviour for such reasons as the following.

First, an argument for this truth arises from the evils to which true faith is opposed; among which are staggering, Rom. iv. 20. wavering, Heb. x. 23. doubting, Matth. xiv. 31. fear, Mark v. 36. These contraries serve greatly to illustrate the nature of faith, and to shew, that believing must have some confidence in it; otherwise it would have doubting and fear in its very nature. For what man, that understandeth the preciousness of his immortal soul, and his danger of losing it, can ever avoid fear, doubting and trouble of heart by any believing, whereby he doth not at all assure himself of salvation?

In the next place, the right manner of trusting and hoping in the Lord, after the examples recorded in

scripture, is by assuring ourselves against all fears and doubtings, that the Lord is our God, and that he is become our salvation, Psal. xxxi. 14. *I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God.* Psal. xviii. 2. *The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.* Isai. xii. 2. *Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.* Psal. xvi. 11. *O my soul, hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.*

Farther, that the direct act of faith, by which we are justified and saved, assures us of salvation, appears from the titles and attributes given to it in scripture. It is the *substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,* Heb. xi. 1. It sets the great things of our salvation hoped for evidently before the eyes of our mind, as if they were already present in their substance, though not, as yet, visible to our bodily eyes. That faith, whereby we are partakers of Christ and become his house, must be worthy to be called *confidence,* and must be accompanied with the rejoicing of hope, Heb. iii. 6, 14. In Heb. x. 22. we are exhorted to *draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith.* Many apply this text to that which they call the reflex act of faith; because they imagine, that all assurance must needs be by reflection. But the words of the text clearly teach us to understand it of that act of faith, whereby we draw near to God, that is, the direct act; and it is that very faith by which the just liveth. This assurance must be full in the true and proper nature of it in opposition to mere doubtfulness; though we are yet farther to labour for that which is full in the highest degree of perfection. In James i. 6, 7, we are expressly required to ask good things of God *in faith nothing doubting;*

which manifestly includeth assurance; and he tells us plainly, that without it *a man ought not to think, that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* Therefore we may firmly conclude, that without it we shall not receive the salvation of Christ. And that which the apostle James requireth us not to doubt of, is the obtaining of the things which we ask; as we may learn from an instruction to the same purpose given by Christ himself, Mark xi. 24. *Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

Again, if we be altogether in a state of suspense and doubting, whether God will be pleased to give Christ to us or not, it is evident, that our souls are quite loose from Christ, and have no holdfast or enjoyment of him as our only salvation and happiness. We do not, in that case, so much as pretend to any actual receiving or laying hold of him; but are rather still to seek whether we have any good ground or right to lay hold of him. Can a woman honestly receive any one as her husband, while she is not assured, that he is fully willing to be her husband?

The same thing may be said concerning the several parts of Christ's salvation, which are to be received by faith. For example, we do not actually receive into our hearts our reconciliation with God and adoption of children, and the title to an everlasting inheritance, until we can assure ourselves, that God is graciously pleased to be our God and Father, and to take us to be his children and heirs. If we do not assuredly believe, that we are dead to sin and alive to God through Christ; that we are risen with Christ; that we are not under the law, but under grace; that we are members of Christ's body, temples of the Holy Ghost, and the dear children of

God; it would be hypocrisy to affect to serve God on account of such privileges, as if we reckoned ourselves partakers of them. And is it not a miserable, worthless kind of faith, which cannot fit a believer to practise in a gospel manner, upon the most pure and powerful principles of grace, but rather leaves him to work upon legal principles; such as, the justice and wrath of God against sinners, and his mercy towards those who perform the condition of sincere obedience? A faith, we may add, which faileth in the very matter of some great duties which are of such a nature, that they include assurance of God's love in the right performance of them; such as, the great duties of peace with God, rejoicing in the Lord always, hope that maketh not ashamed; owning the Lord as our God and Saviour; praying to him as our Father in heaven; offering up body and soul as an acceptable sacrifice to him; casting all our cares of body and soul upon him; contentment and hearty thanksgiving in every condition; making our boast in the Lord; triumphing in his praise; rejoicing in tribulation; putting on Christ in our baptism; receiving Christ's body as broken for us and his blood as shed for us in the Lord's supper; committing our souls willingly to God as our Redeemer, when he shall be pleased to call for us; loving Christ's second appearance and looking for it as that blessed hope.

A reader who expects to find these and other arguments offered by Mr. Marshal on this subject, fairly stated and answered in Mr. Bellamy's work, will be utterly disappointed. He takes notice indeed of one or two of the texts from which Mr. Marshal reasons. On Heb. xi. 1. he observes that, "If the "word of God gives a sinner out of Christ no absolute "unconditional right to the blessings of the gospel;

" faith cannot see what is not, nor believe without " evidence." Here he only denies Mr. Marshal's doctrine about the freeness of a sinner's right of access to Christ, (which doctrine we propose to consider afterwards;) but says nothing against Mr. Marshal's remark, that the apostle's expressions in this text, carry in them an appropriation of the good things not seen. It is plain that a person, who has the faith described in this text, views the things which that faith apprehends as things for which he hopes: and the certainty of his expectation of them is expressed by emphatical words, *substance* or *confidence*, (as the same word is rendered in chap. iii. 6. of this book) and *evidence* which produces full conviction.

With regard to James i. 6. Mr. Bellamy says; " To ask in faith: In the faith of what? Of the truths " revealed in the gospel concerning the way of access " to God in the name of Christ as our great High Priest, " and God's readiness to hear and answer all requests " agreeable to his will, put up to him in his name. " These truths ought to be—these truths must be firmly believed." But Mr. Bellamy could not deny, that when a person has the faith of these truths wrought in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and, in the exercise of that faith, asks such things as God hath promised to give to poor sinners for Christ's sake; such a person will believe, that he shall certainly receive these things of the Lord. This being the faith in which the apostle directs us to ask, it is plain, that the contrary, doubting against which he cautions us, must be, as Mr. Marshal observes, a doubting whether we shall obtain the things that we ask. This is all that Mr. Marshal's argument requires; and there is nothing against it in Mr. Bellamy's observation.

On Mark xi. 24. Mr. Bellamy puts the following gloss: "Whensoever the disciples of Christ were called to perform any miraculous works and were looking up to God to do them, they must firmly believe that he would do the thing." This observation is nothing against, but rather serves to strengthen Mr. Marshal's argument: for, though the faith of miracles differed from saving faith in respect of its aim or end; that of the one being the accomplishment of an external miraculous work, that of the other being the salvation of the soul; yet they agreed in two respects: for both proceeded upon a word of promise; and both were means of obtaining the thing promised. Hence, as Mr. Marshal justly observes, "the faith of miracles gives "us some light as to the nature of saving faith. Christ "assured them on whom they were wrought, and who "had the commission for working them, that the "miracles should be wrought, if they believed without "doubting of the event. There is a reason for this re-"semblance; because the end of working miracles was "to confirm the doctrine of the gospel of salvation by "faith in Christ's name, as the scriptures clearly shew: "and indeed the salvation of a sinner is itself a very "great miracle." But the truth is, Mr. Bellamy had no sufficient reason to limit the faith spoken of in v. 24th to the faith of miracles. Our Lord, indeed, speaks of the faith of miracles in the foregoing verse: but in this verse he goes on to speak of that faith which is common to all his people. It is usual with our Lord to take occasion from things of a more peculiar nature to discourse of the common duty of Christians. Thus, for example, from the case of one doing a miracle in his name he takes occasion to speak of the ordinary duty of doing offices of kindness to Christians for his sake, Mark ix. 39, 40, 41. That, in this 24th verse,

he speaks of that believing which is common to all true Christians, appears from the expression, *when ye pray*. Wherever praying is mentioned absolutely, as here, it is to be understood of the common duty of prayer. This is still more evident from the following verse, which shews that the prayer here meant, is that in which we are to exercise the duty of foregiving others their trespasses against us. Now, if the praying, in which this faith is exercised, be the common duty of Christians; then the faith itself is so, too. It is plainly the import of our Lord's words, that the former ought never to be without the latter. This place of scripture, says Mr. Calvin, serves excellently to set "forth the nature and efficacy of faith, shewing "that it is an assured resting upon the goodness of "God, which admits not of doubting. They only be-"lieve, in Christ's account, who view God as propitious "or reconciled to them; and who doubt not but that "he will give them what they ask. Hence we see "what a diabolical delusion or fascination the papists "are under, who contend for a doubting faith and "charge us with presumption, if we dare come into "his presence, in the persuasion of his paternal favour "towards us. Paul represents it as a principal benefit "which we have by Christ, that in him we have bold-"ness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

Before we conclude this letter, it may be proper to take notice of Mr. Bellamy's remarks on some passages of the XVI. Dialogue of Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio.

Mr. Hervey observes, that "this appropriating per-"suasion is comprehended in all the figurative descrip-"tions of faith which occur in Holy Writ. Faith, is "styled a looking unto Jesus. But if we do not look

" unto Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, what " comfort or what benefit can we derive from the " sight? When the Israelites looked unto the brazen " serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each " particular person for himself. Faith is styled a rest- " ing upon Christ, or a receiving of him. But when I " rest upon an object, I use it as my support. When " I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. " Faith is a casting ourselves upon Christ. This may " receive some elucidation from an incident recorded " in the Acts. When those who sailed with Paul saw " their vessel shattered; saw the waves prevailing; " saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship, " they cast themselves upon the floating planks. They " cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple; " not questioning their right to make use of them; and " they clave to these supporters with a chearful confi- " dence; not doubting but, according to the apostle's " promise, they should escape safe to land. So we are " to cast ourselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ, without " indulging a doubt concerning our right to make use " of him, or the impossibility of his failing us. Faith " is characterized by eating the bread of life. And " can this be done without a personal application? " Faith is expressed by putting on Christ as a commo- " dious and beautiful garment. And can any idea or " any expression more strongly denote an actual ap- " propriation?"

The unprejudiced will allow these observations to be much to Mr. Hervey's purpose; that is, they clearly prove that there is, in the nature of saving faith an application of Christ to ourselves in particular.

And what does Mr. Bellamy reply? Why, says he, " Christ is to be acknowledged, received and

"honoured, according to his character, as the pro-
"mised Messiah.—Is he compared to the brazen ser-
"pent? We are not to believe that we are healed; but
"to look to him for healing. Is he compared to a city
"of refuge? We are not to believe ourselves safe;
"but to fly to him for safety. Is he compared to bread
"and water? We are not to believe, that our hunger
"and thirst are assuaged; but to eat the living bread,
"and to drink the living water that they may be so."

In this reply we observe, first, that Mr. Bellamy misrepresents the sentiments of his opponents. For they are so far from saying, that faith is a belief, that we are healed; or that we are already in a safe state, or that our hunger and thirst are assuaged; that they will not allow, that faith, properly speaking, believes any thing concerning the state we are already in, excepting that we are miserable sinners of Adam's family to whom the gospel is preached. And while they tell sinners, that the gospel is directed to them, in such a manner as to warrant their immediate reception of Christ as therein exhibited; they at the same time, declare, that the gospel, without that reception of Christ, will be unprofitable to them. In the next place, it is to be observed, that, in Mr. Bellamy's remark, there is no notice taken of Mr. Hervey's argument; the force of which lies in two things. One is, that it is only true and saving faith which is meant by these metaphorical expressions. The other thing is, that each of them includes the notion of a person's application of something to his own use or for the benefit of himself in particular. If these two things hold true, (and Mr. Bellamy says nothing against either of them,) it will necessarily follow, that there is such an application of Christ to ourselves in the nature of saving faith.

Another argument which Mr. Hervey offers in support of this doctrine, is, that our Saviour calls the act of Thomas which he expressed by saying, *My Lord and my God*, believing, John xx. 28, 29. To this Mr. Bellamy answers in the following words, "The thing, that Thomas was so faithless about, was "not his particular interest in Christ; nor was this "the thing he believed, that Christ died for him in "particular. But the resurrection of Christ was the "thing, the only thing in question with him. Over-"joyed to see him, feel him, hear him, know him; "in the language of fervent love, he cries out, *My "Lord and my God*. Thus then stands the argument "—because Thomas believed, that Christ was risen "from the dead on the clearest evidence; therefore "justifying faith consists in believing, that pardon is "mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual bles-"sings are mine without any evidence at all from scrip-"ture, sense or reason."

Here it is necessary to observe, as before, that the force of Mr. Hervey's argument lies in two things. The first is, that what Thomas expressed on this occasion was true and saving faith. That it was so, is evident from our Lord's declaration of the blessedness of those who should believe, as Thomas had done, without having the opportunity, which he had, of seeing Christ with the bodily eye. The other thing on which Mr. Hervey's argument stands is, that what our Lord calls Thomas's faith or believing included the appropriating persuasion, that Jesus Christ was his own Lord and God. This, indeed, Mr. Bellamy seems to deny, because, says he, the resurrection of Christ was the thing, the only thing in question with him; and therefore the only thing that our Lord represented Thomas as believ-

ing on this occasion. But when Mr. Bellamy supposes that Thomas might have doubted of Christ's resurrection without doubting of his being his Lord and his God; he supposes a gross absurdity, namely, that Christ might have been Thomas's Lord and God, though he had continued in the state of the dead. Surely, as the apostle declares, 1 Corinth. xv. 17, if Christ be not raised, *our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins.* Besides, the believing, which our Lord here ascribes to Thomas, cannot be limited to the historical fact, that Christ rose from the dead: because our Lord pronounces them all blessed who attain such believing. But they are not all blessed who believe that historical fact. For wicked men may believe it, and devils believe it, and tremble. After all, can any thing be plainer, than this, that our Lord, when he says to Thomas, *Thou hast believed*, refers to the declaration which Thomas had made immediately before of his faith in these words, *My Lord and my God;* or that the faith declared in these words is an appropriating faith?—We may add a judicious observation of Dr. Guise on this passage: "Though the see-"ing and the handling of the risen body of our Lord," says that expositor, "were strong inducements or mo-"tives to this divine appropriating faith; yet it was the "word of Christ set home upon his heart with power, "which begat it in him; for it was immediately upon "Christ's saying, Be not faithless but believing, that "he cried out, *My Lord and my God.*"

We conclude this letter with a caution, which may be of use to remove a common prejudice against our doctrine concerning the nature of saving faith. When we say, that a real persuasion, that Christ is mine, and that I shall have eternal salvation through his name, belongs to the essence of faith, it is not meant, that a

person never acts faith, but when he is sensible of such a persuasion. There are various degrees of faith; and its language is sometimes more, sometimes less distinct and explicit. The confidence of faith is, in many, like a grain of mustard seed; or like a spark of heavenly fire amidst the troubled sea of all manner of corruptions and temptations; which, were not this faith secretly supported by the power of God according to his promise, would soon extinguish it. Hence this real persuasion may be rooted in many a heart; in which for a time it cannot be distinctly discerned; yet it in some measure discovers itself by secret wrestling against unbelief, slavish fear and all other corruptions.

LETTER III.

Of the grounds of that appropriation which is in the nature of saving faith.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

MR. MARSHAL and others, whom Mr. Bellamy opposes, teach, that the evil of unbelief does not lie merely in a person's disbelief of such speculative propositions as these; That Christ is the son of God; that he died; rose again and ascended to heaven; or that every true believer shall be saved;—but rather in a person's practical disbelief of this truth, that there is in the gospel-dispensation such a grant and promise of Christ, directed to sinners of mankind, as affords each of them, and particularly the person himself, a sufficient ground to rely on Christ, immediately upon hearing

the gospel, for his own salvation. When we say, that soul-ruining unbelief lies in a *practical* disbelief of this truth, we mean, that it does not lie merely in the want of *an* assent to this doctrinal proposition (for some sort of assent to it may be given by such as continue under the dominion of sin)—but in the want of such a *cordial reception* of this truth, as carries in it the actual exercise of that fiducial reliance; by which the person takes Christ and eternal life in him to himself in particular. That every sinner of mankind, to whom the gospel of the grace of God is preached, has a sufficient ground for such an immediate reliance on Jesus Christ for his own salvation, is the doctrine of Mr. Bellamy's opponents and of the Bible. To lay before you, Christian Brethren, the grounds of this appropriating faith, as we find them in the Bible, is the design of the present letter.

First, the promise of Christ and his salvation, directed to all the hearers of the word, is a sufficient ground for this appropriating faith. What was the first gospel heard by fallen man? It was a promise of Christ as the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent. How did Peter preach the gospel to his hearers? He said to them, *The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.*† That is, as if he had said, "The promise is so directed to you and "to your children, that each of you has a sufficient "warrant for an immediate dependance upon it, as a "promise to him in particular; and, on the profession "of this faith, he and his children are entitled to bap-"tism; just as when Abraham received the promise,

† Acts ii. 39.

"he and his family were to be circumcised. Nor is "the sense of your extreme guiltiness to hinder you "from receiving the promise as directed to you; for "this promise is no other than that gospel, which we, "the apostles and succeeding ministers of Christ, are "commissioned to preach to every creature, even to the "profligate Gentiles; to as many as God is pleased to "favour with the gospel-call." The promise here meant was undoubtedly the promise of the remission of sins and of all other spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. The apostle exhorts his hearers to be *baptised for the remission of sins;* and he adds this reason, *For the promise is to you.* But this promise could not have been a good reason for their receiving baptism as signifying and sealing the remission of sins, unless it was a promise of that comprehensive blessing. Paul, in like manner, represents the gospel, which was preached to sinners both under the Old and New Testament as consisting in a free promise, Gal. iii. 8. *The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham.* And what was that gospel? It was just this promise; *In thee shall all the nations be blessed.* Heb. iv. 1, 2. *Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.* Some understand the expression, a promise being left, as signifying *the promise being forsaken by us.* Even thus understood, the words imply that the promise is so addressed to us, that we are warranted to apprehend it; otherwise how could we be said to forsake it? But the sense in which the words are taken by our translators, seems preferable. The word *left* is used in this sense in 1 Pet. ii. 21. *Leaving us an example.* John xiv. 27. *Peace I leave with you.* And that it should be so taken here, is

most agreeable to the connexion; for the apostle had been shewing in the latter part of the preceding chapter, that God had given the Israelites a promise of a temporal rest in the land of Canaan; but that they were excluded from it through unbelief. Well, adds the apostle, Let us fear, lest as our case is like theirs in having a promise left us; so it should also be like theirs in our coming short of it. Here it is plainly supposed, that the gospel preached to us is *a promise left us* to be believed or trusted in; as the promise of the land of Canaan was given to the Israelites for that purpose.

This promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ admits of two considerations. First, considered as it was made to Christ from eternity in the covenant of grace and to all the elect, as his spiritual seed in him, it is, in this view, no other than God's unchangeable decree concerning their salvation. But, secondly, considered as it is proposed and directed to mankind sinners indefinitely in the gospel dispensation, it is the means which God is pleased to make use of for the execution of that unchangeable decree. In the former respect, the accomplishment of the promise to every one, to whom it was made, is infallibly sure: in the latter respect, the promise is proposed and directed to many, who shall in the event come short of it: because the accomplishment of it is not to be attained, but by means of true faith. They who have not faith, are not, as yet, in the actual possession of any other saving or spiritual blessing. This appears to be what some orthodox divines meant, when they called faith the condition of our interest in such blessings. This is all that the expression, "requiring faith as the condition to "interest sinners in Christ,"—as it is used in our Larger Catechism, can mean; consistently with the general tenor of the evangelical doctrine taught in that

form of sound words, and particularly with what is there taught concerning the covenant of grace being made with Christ as the second Adam representing all the elect as his seed. This, however, is not the proper meaning of the word condition, when we speak of the condition of a covenant or promise. For, as a judicious writer on moral philosophy observes, "Although the "acceptance of a promise be necessary to render the "obligation of a promise complete; yet it is not what "usually comes under the name of a condition; for a "condition is something in the promise itself upon "which, even after the promise has been accepted, the "performance of it is suspended. Hence it appears, "that the same notion is not affixed to this word by "civilians in treating of contracts and promises, as by "metaphysical writers in speaking of what they call a "*conditio sine qua non*, that is, something without "which some other thing cannot take place*." Hence it appears, that when faith is said to be the condition of the covenant of grace, the assertion suggests the notion not of one of the promised blessings of that covenant, but rather of something which is the proper ground of our title or claim to these blessings; just as man's perfect obedience was, according to the covenant of works, to have been the proper ground of his claim to eternal life. Arminians and Neonomians, by this use of the word condition, have subverted the gospel of Christ. On the other hand, though we allow, that we receive justification and other blessings promised in the gospel by means of faith, we maintain, that faith itself, considered as a work of the law, is excluded as well as all our other works, from being, in any proper sense, a federal cause or condition of the gospel-

* Vide Observations Gersch. Carmichael in opus Puffendorf de officio hominis et civis.

promise†, Rom. iii. 20. iv. 4, 16. xi. 6. and we hold the gospel-promise, (which is a promise of faith as well as of pardon or any other blessing,) as that promise is exhibited to sinners in the word, to be free and unconditional. Nor is it less so, that sinners cannot be actual partakers of Christ and his benefits therein exhibited, unless it be received by faith; since the most free and unconditional gift cannot be possessed or enjoyed without being accepted. The freest gift or promise may be rejected. Many scripture-examples shew, that faith may be necessary as the means of obtaining the benefit of an absolute promise. It cannot be shewn, that Abraham would have obtained his Isaac, that

† "Some worthy divines," says Mr. Ralph Erskine, "make "faith the condition of the covenant of grace; but their sound "explication of what they mean shews, that they dare not make "it the proper condition. If any that pretend to soundness do "so, they but expose their darkness and discover their mistake "concerning the covenant of grace, which is a free promise in "Christ Jesus; wherein faith itself and all the blessings that "attend it, are freely and absolutely promised. Indeed conditions "on our part, properly so called, would destroy the nature of "the gospel, and turn the free covenant of grace into a condi-"tional covenant of works. It would destroy the peace of the "poor humbled sinner, to think that there is such and such a "condition to be fulfilled by him, before he meddle with the "promise. Then he stands back, he dares not believe, because "he supposes he wants this and that condition and qualifica-"tion. This legal dream hardens his heart against the gospel, "and fosters his unbelief to the dishonor of God and to his "own ruin. But if he could see the promise free and absolute, "and that there is no condition in this covenant but Christ's "obedience unto death, which is performed to God's satisfac-"tion: then a door is opened to him to plead for all upon this "ground, saying, give me faith, repentance, all grace for "Christ's sake. If faith itself were a condition, the grand ob-"jection is, Oh! but I cannot believe. Why, if faith were not "absolutely promised, there would be no relief in that strait: "the gospel could not be a joyful sound to sinners that are "humbled to see their want of faith.—Though the use of "means be required both of sinners and saints, and though we "be under a command and obligation to faith, repentance, and

Gideon would have saved Israel from the oppression of the Midianites, or that David would have been raised to the throne of Israel, otherwise than by faith in the promise; and yet the promise made to each of these persons was free and unconditional. Since, then, the gospel-promise is so absolutely free, and since a person by the direct act of faith believes this promise as addressed to him, saying, *God hath spoken and he will make it good*, it follows, that there must be, in that act a real trust in the word of God, implying an assurance of salvation, previous to the person's reflexion upon his own exercise in believing. The Lord says, *I will remember thy sins no more, I will give thee a new heart:* Supposing that a person is brought to depend

"all other duties and graces; yet the covenant of grace is a "free absolute and unconditional promise. There is indeed a "condition of order and connection between one promised "blessing and another, they being like so many links of a chain. "Hence in the dispensation of the gospel many promises are "expressed in a conditional way. But there is not a condi-"tional promise in the Bible, but what is reductively abso-"lute.—The promise, in Malachi iv. 2. of *the Sun of righteous-"ness arising with healing under his wings*, is said to be a condi-"tional promise; as being to them *that fear his name*. But I "will tell you, there is no conditional-form put upon any pro-"mise in the Bible, to keep back a soul from applying and ta-"king hold of that promise; but rather to draw it to embrace "the promise in the way of taking Christ for the condition, or "running to an absolute promise, where that condition is pro-"mised. For instance, are you apprehensive, that you are "destitute of that fear of God? Do not on that account stand "back; but rather come forward to embrace the promise just "now mentioned in the way of looking to another promise "where the fear of the Lord is absolutely promised, Jerem. "xxxii. 40. *I will put my fear into your hearts, that you shall not "depart from me.* Thus you are to do with all the promises "that seem to run in a conditional form. Run to the absolute "promise, where the condition itself is promised; run to Christ "himself in whom all fulness is, and *in whom all the promises "are yea and amen:* having him, you will have the condition "of all the promises." See some sermons, entitled, *The Pregnant Promise.*

on these promises as directed to him through Christ, he must, in the very act of dependence and according to the measure of it, be persuaded that God will give him pardon and a new heart. It is therefore a dangerous error to assert, "That it is presumption for a person "to be assured of his pardon, otherwise than as being "conscious of his faith and sincerity." Hereby we are forbidden to have any dependence on the gospel-promise, till we know that we have attained the conditions of it; and that promise is made as properly conditional as the promise of the covenant of works.

In the second place, the gospel is such *a free grant* of Jesus Christ to sinners of mankind, as makes it their immediate duty, upon the hearing of the word, to take him to themselves as their own Saviour, and to trust in him for their deliverance both from sin and wrath: We take this grant to be the import of the whole gospel, as it is preached to sinners. The following are some of the passages, in which that *grant* is formally expressed. The first we take notice of is in John vi. 32. where Christ, speaking to such as appear, from the 25, 41 and 42 verses, to have been unbelievers, and making a comparison between himself and the manna, which fell about the tents of Israel in the wilderness, says, *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.* As the simple raining of the manna about the camp of Israel is called a giving of it, in verse 31. before it was tasted or fed upon; so "the "very revelation or offer of Christ," says the judicious Calvin upon this place, "is called a giving of him, "before he be received and believed on." Mr. Bellamy, in his remark upon this text, neither denies, that Christ is there speaking to people who were still persisting in their unbelief, nor that the faith, which is answerable to this blessed grant, must include appro-

priation. Thus he leaves the argument of his opponents from this passage untouched. He even expresses their doctrine, when he declares, "that all mankind "are as welcome to receive Christ, as the whole con- "gregation were to take the manna and eat." For surely the right which the Israelites had to the manna, was a right to take every one for himself, as soon as it was presented to his view; not looking for his warrant to intermeddle with it to something within himself, to his feelings or good dispositions, but only to the Divine grant and the present exhibition of the manna about his tent. Had Mr. Bellamy adhered to this way of thinking and speaking about the warrant of faith in the gospel-offer, he would never have employed his pen on this subject against Mr. Marshal or Mr. Hervey.

Another passage wherein this grant is plainly expressed is that which we have in 1 John v. 11. *And this is the record or testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.* That they who are bound to believe this testimony of God concerning his Son, are not only such as know themselves to be true believers or among the elect; but all men to whom the word of the gospel comes, is evident from the preceding verse, which represents the great sin of unbelief, the damning sin of gospel-hearers, as lying in their not believing this testimony. *He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the testimony which God gave of his Son. And this is his testimony, that he hath given to us eternal life.*

"True," says Mr. Bellamy; "but *this life is in his* "*Son.* Therefore, he that is united to Christ, hath "eternal life: For he that hath the Son, hath life. "But those who are out of Christ have no interest in "him. For he that hath not the Son hath not life."

Answer. All this is granted: but how does it affect the reasoning of Mr. Bellamy's opponents? Does Mr. Bellamy mean to say, that God's offer of eternal life is conditional; because, according to that offer, eternal life cannot be received and enjoyed without union to Christ? This would be as unreasonable, as it would be, for a poor woman, to whom some great and generous prince had offered himself with a large inheritance, requiring nothing in order to her actual possesion, but that she should immediately accept his offer, to complain that the offer of the inheritance was not free, but only conditional; because the prince had offered it to be received and enjoyed in the way of a marriage-union to himself. The grant that we speak of is a grant of Christ himself, John vi. 32. that is, of union and communion with him; and thus it is a grant of eternal life in him, according to the text now under consideration.

Another remarkable text to the same purpose is in John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* While God passed over the fallen angels, he set his love upon a certain number of fallen men; whose recovery he purposed from all eternity to accomplish: The giving of his own Son was to be the foundation, not of this love-design itself, but of the execution of it. Accordingly, he not only delivered up his only begotten Son to the death as the surety and substitute of the chosen company; but, as the means of gathering to himself all that belong to that company, he made a publick grant of him to sinners of mankind; warranting any one of them, upon the intimation of this grant, to trust in it as a grant made to him in particular, and as infalli-

ble security for his own salvation both from sin and wrath: and *whosoever thus believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* It is observable, that after the words, *He gave his only begotten Son,* there is an *ellipsis,*—the particular persons, to whom *the Son* is given, not being named. This may be considered as a blank to be filled with the names of individuals, as they come to believe in Christ: such persons being brought to say, *To us, to us the Son is given. To me,* says the poor sinner, whom the Holy Spirit brings to a single dependance on this Divine grant for his everlasting salvation.

Thus it appears, that the gospel is such a free grant of Christ Jesus to sinners of mankind, as warrants them, upon hearing it, to claim and receive him as their own Saviour.

Mr. Bellamy attempts to ridicule this doctrine in the following words: "If this grant only makes a "common interest mine; then I ought to believe a "common interest only to be mine. If the grant "makes a saving interest mine, then I ought to be- "lieve a saving interest mine. And what is mine by "grant, if the grant be absolute, is mine before I be- "lieve it, and whether I believe it or not."

Answer. Mr. Bellamy here proceeds upon the supposition, that his opponents make no distinction between the Divine grant in the gospel, and the declaration of what is, has been, or shall be matter of fact, as in history or prophecy. If God declares any thing to be ours in the last way, it is, no doubt, ours or will be ours according to his declaration, whether we believe, or not. But the grant in the gospel is of a different nature: for it is such a testimony of God

concerning Christ and his salvation the way of a free offer or promise, as cannot be believed without receiving, nor disbelieved, without rejecting, what is therein exhibited to us. And will any reasonable person say, that our interest in a thing presented to us, though in the most absolutely free promise, or under the notion of the freest gift, is the same, when the thing is utterly despised and rejected, as when it is cordially received and actually possessed by us? The gospel is the testimony of God exhibiting Christ as his free gift; a gift, which we are actually to receive by believing that testimony. Two things are, therefore, carefully to be attended to in this matter: One is, the nature of the testimony to be believed; it being a grant or promise of Christ and his salvation. The other thing is, the supernatural appointment of the unfeigned faith of that testimony to be the only mean of our coming to the possession of what is therein exhibited; that is, of Christ and of eternal life in him†.

The difference between the common interest of all the hearers of the word in the gospel-promise and the special interest of believers in it is a point which the writers, whom Mr. Bellamy opposes, have, in some

† "Quest. If God hath given a promise to me, will it not "be accomplished, whether I believe or not?"—"Answer. If "he give you grace to believe, and so give you it in possession, "then it infers an obligation on God to accomplish it to you; "because, to the believer who receives the promise, it is given "definitively and particularly. But when it is given only in the "gospel offer and external dispensation, as it is to all the hear-"ers of the gospel, this infers no obligation on God to make "good the promise to every or any particular man:—If you "offer a man your bond for a sum of money, and he reject it; "then you are under no obligation by that bond to give him "the contents of it. If he accept the bond, then you are "thereby obliged; but if he reject, then you are free, and

measure, illustrated by similes taken from the transactions of common life. "The promise in the exter-"nal dispensation of it," says one of these evangelical divines, "is like a blank bond or an indefinite obligation "to blank persons: sinners in general are named; no "person's name is peculiarly inserted therein. But if "you by faith fill up your name, then the bond gives a "right to you in particular: and that which was yours "only generally before, becomes yours actually and "particularly, upon your receiving it with particular "application to yourself." "A king's promise of "pardon," says another of them, "directed to a com-"pany of rebels, cannot profit any of them but such as "accept of it. A legacy, left by the last will of a "wealthy friend to a certain family, without specifying "one individual of the family, can only profit that per-"son or those branches of the family, who claim a right "to the legacy upon their friend's testament; but to the "rest it is unprofitable; because, through pride or ig-"norance or sloth, they forsake their own mercy. Sup-"pose a letter should come directed to me containing a "bank-note of 50, 100, or 1000 pounds sterling, or "more, if you will. The direction of the letter to "me gives me a right to carry the letter to the bank, "and ask payment. But if, through pride and con-"ceit that I am rich and increased with goods, I de-

"cannot be accused of unfaithfulness to your promise or bond. "So here, if you truly and believingly take God at his word, "then he is bound by his own promise to make out all; for "then, *believing, you have everlasting life.* But if you will not "take God's bond, nor receive his record, but reject it by un-"belief, saying, in effect, that it is not good enough security "for your salvation; then you make him a liar, and his pro-"mise an untruth. if you live and die in this case, he is so "far from being bound to give you the blessing contained in "that charter, that he is bound on the contrary to execute "his threatening upon you, *He that believeth not, shall be "damned.*" *The Pregnant Promise.*

" cline receiving the letter and asking payment of the " sum; in that case, I come short of my own privi- " lege, and it becomes unprofitable to me. I own," adds the judicious writer, " that in every one of these " similitudes there is a disparity. The only use I make " of them is to shew how near Christ and his salvation " are brought to us in the word of promise, that we " may be encouraged to draw near by the blood of " Jesus, with full assurance of faith; since he is " faithful, who hath promised."

In the third place, the preaching of Christ to sinners is for this very end, that in him, as thus exhibited, they may have a sufficient ground to rest on for their own salvation. The scripture represents the preaching of Christ crucified as the preaching of the forgiveness of sins, Acts xiii. 36. *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that, through this man, is preached to you the forgiveness of sins:* and as the preaching of peace, Ephes. ii. 17. *Being come, he hath preached peace to you that were far off to them that were nigh.* In Acts iii. 20. Peter gives a summary of that gospel which he and the other apostles preached, and which every hearer is bound to believe with application to himself in particular: *God*, says he, *having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities;* according to the ancient promise made to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* The preaching of Christ's resurrection is represented as the preaching of that sweet promise, *I will give you the sure mercies of David*, Acts xiii. 34. The truth is, the doctrine concerning the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, if it no way included or implied a promise of everlasting salvation directed to sinners of mankind,

would be no more glad tidings to them, than to the fallen angels. But when persons hear Christ preached to them, as a Saviour, who came into the world, died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven for sinners of mankind, unjust, children of wrath, dead in sin*: in a word, when they hear Christ preached as having done all these things for persons of Adam's ruined family, bearing the same characters, which, they are conscious, belong to themselves; if the Holy Spirit, at the same time, open their understandings to apprehend the true import of what is preached to them; they cannot fail to discern therein a sure foundation to rest upon for their everlasting salvation: For, in that case, the hearers are brought to a spiritual apprehension of Christ in his person, as Immanuel, their kinsman Redeemer; and in his offices, as their enlightening Prophet, their atoning and interceding High Priest, and their sin-subduing King†.

Suppose, that a man of known integrity has ordered his servants to set provisions before a number of people ready to perish with hunger; and that the provisions are accordingly presented to them with high commendations of their value and suitableness. Should one of the servants, at the same time, say to the starving company: "You have no right to take any of "these provisions, or to use them for allaying your "hunger, as if they were already your own:" would not every considerate person allow his remark to be absurd, as well as a cruel sporting with human misery. No better is the doctrine of one who pretends to preach the gospel of Christ to sinners; and yet denies, that

* 1 Tim. i, 15. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Rom. v. 6, 8, 10.
† Matth. i. 23. 1 Corinth. i. 30.

they have any present or immediate warrant in that gospel to take him to themselves for their own Saviour.

It may be useful to observe here, that this common relation of the person and offices of Christ, of his death, resurrection, ascension and intercession, to sinners of mankind, as offered to them and suitable to their case, is carefully to be distinguished from the peculiar relation thereof to the elect whose redemption Christ undertook to accomplish in the council of peace from eternity. The former common relation is that, which faith proceeds upon, and not the latter. For no person can know that Christ undertook for him, or, in other words, that he is one of God's elect, before he believe in Christ: And whilst any matter is unknown, it cannot be either an object or a ground of faith†.

† It has been asserted, that the immediate duty of the hearer of the gospel is to believe, in the first place, his personal election to eternal life. It is indeed a precious article of gospel-truth, that God, of his mere good pleasure, hath elected a certain number of mankind to everlasting life; and that none but those, who are thus chosen from eternity, become believers and saints in time, Ephes. i. 4 Acts xiii. 48. xv. 18. As it is of his good pleasure, that he actually gives his saving grace to some and not to others, Matth. ix. 25, 26. So it is of the same good pleasure that he purposed to do so, Ephes. i. 5. This doctrine concerning God's choosing of some of fallen mankind, not because they were foreseen to be better than others, but only because it pleased God to choose them, ought, no doubt, to be believed by every hearer of the gospel. Nor has the belief of it, in itself, any tendency to discourage persons from the diligent use of the means of their salvation, or from essaying to come to Christ. On the contrary, the sovereign grace of God, which this doctrine represents as pitching upon some of the chief of sinners, and the connexion, which it establishes between the right use of the means of salvation and the attainment of salvation, should rather encourage the hope of that attainment by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; even in those who have the most distressing sense of guilt and depravity. But this belief of, the doctrine of election is quite different from a person's knowledge or belief, that he is himself one of the elect: just as it is one thing for a person to

In the fourth place, there is a solid ground for the appropriation of saving faith in this declaration which God makes of his name to every member of the visible church, *I am the Lord thy God*. By this declaration in a multitude of places of scripture, and particularly in the preface to ten commandments, God lays all who read or hear his word under an obligation to know and

know, that government has made a draught of some men out of the regiment of militia to which he belongs, to go upon a certain expedition: and another thing for him to know, that he himself is one of that draught. The scripture teaches, that God hath chosen some particular persons to be believers in Christ; but by no means, that a hearer of the word may know himself to be one of these persons, otherwise than by his actual believing and the fruits of it. We are to know *first* our calling, and *then* our election. There are only two ways, by which a person can know what God hath decreed concerning his eternal state, or indeed concerning any other thing; namely, by his word and by his work. But in none of these ways can a person know, that he is one of the elect before his actual believing in Christ. It has been said, That our faith should begin, where God begins. But it is evident, that our faith must begin with the things that God hath revealed to us: for with *secret things*, or things not revealed, it has nothing to do. A person cannot begin to believe, that God hath elected him in particular to eternal life, till God reveal it to him. It has been said, that, in the appropriating faith of the gospel, a person believes his own election, as well as his salvation by Jesus Christ. But there is a manifest difference in various respects. 1. We have an offer or promise of salvation directed to all the hearers of the gospel, Acts ii. 39. xiii. 26. But there neither is, nor can be, in the nature of the thing, an offer or promise of election as such; because election, being an eternal immanent act of God, cannot be said, without the grossest absurdity to be either offered or received. 2. Salvation is justly considered as an end attainable by the use of appointed means. But nothing can be more absurd, than it would be to represent election, which is the original or first cause of our salvation, as something to be attained by the use of means. 3. The salvation, offered to sinners in the gospel, is apprehended by faith as a present salvation: whereas election is necessarily considered as something *past*, to which we are to look back. "Saving faith at first," as some divines have justly observed, "has no back look to "Divine purposes and intentions: it takes no consideration of "what may have been formerly true about the person, in any

acknowledge him as the Lord their God. Nay, the manifest connection of this declaration with each of the ten commandments shews, that none of them will be observed in an acceptable manner, without a spiritual, believing view of the Lord, as our God in Christ. Such is the faith which the Lord promises to work in his people, Zechar. xiii. 9. *I will say, Thou art my people:*

" counsels of the Father and the Son concerning him; it makes " no enquiry, whether any particular eye was had to the per- " son, in the former appointment and offering up of Christ's " sacrifice. But it looks straight out to Christ as revealed in " the word, to his blood and righteousness as there set forth: " and on the ground of the free exhibition, it applies all to the " person's self." Display of the Secession Testimony, p. 176. 4. It may be farther observed, that saving faith, if it were, in the first instance, a person's belief of his own election; would infer the present interest of the person in the salvation of Christ exhibited in the gospel from his eternal election. But the order in which faith proceeds is quite the reverse: it first apprehends the person's interest in the salvation of Christ as presently exhibited in the gospel; and, from the person's interest, thus apprehended, infers his eternal election. For, as the same divines have observed, " Jesus Christ is *evidently set forth* to sinners, " *before their eyes* crucified *among* them, Gal. iii. 1. A present " revelation and offer is made of him as crucified or dead,— " for them to rest upon in the way of receiving him by faith: " and faith receives him with appropriation,—saying, Christ is " mine, his satisfaction and righteousness are mine,—upon " the ground of that present offer which faith accepts. And " when it thus appropriates its object, it has a glorious " privilege, under the Holy Spirit's influence,—of going " farther out upon its object in the word: so that it looks " backward and forward through the wide field of grace, in " ascending the hill of God. It rises up to a view of election, " in the Lord's everlasting love; to a view of Christ's amazing " love, in laying down his life for the person; and to a view of " the soul's portion in the land afar off, which makes to rejoice " in hope of the glory of God. But still it is a present interest " in Christ by a present receiving of him, that sinners have " immediately ado with. And as it is the duty of all who hear " the gospel to take out or verify this saving interest to them- " selves,—by the appropriation of faith; so these other blessed " interests (here spoken of) will always be found inseparably " connected therewith in the chain of free grace." Id. p. 179, 180.

and they shall say, The Lord is my God. Jerem. iii. 4, 22. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth? Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* Hosea ii. 16. *And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi,* that is, my Husband. Jerem. xxiii. 6. *This is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.*

"If these passages," says Mr. Bellamy, "prove "any thing to your purpose, they prove, that all the "Christless sinners in Christendom, how wicked soe-"ver, if they be baptized are, all of them, married "to Christ, children of God and heirs of heaven."

But Mr. Bellamy's consequence is justly denied. For though we maintain, that these and the like passages, rightly understood, afforded church-members, under the Old Testament dispensation, and still afford them, under the New, a sufficient warrant to trust in Christ Jesus as their only justifying righteousness, and in God as their God and Father in Christ; assuring them likewise, that, in thus believing, they would be justified and received into the number of the children of God;—yet it will not follow, that persons are partakers of these privileges, who, instead of trusting in these declarations, despise them, continuing under the reigning power of unbelief. All that such persons, according to the doctrine of Mr. Marshal, can justly infer from their outward privileges in being under the gospel-dispensation, in being baptized and so forth, is, that a spiritual marriage to Christ, and adoption into the family of God, and the heavenly inheritance, are exhibited and offered to them in the gospel-promise, to be received by faith in Christ; but, by no means, that

they have a saving interest in these benefits before they believe.

Mr. Bellamy adds, "As to these texts their true "sense may be easily seen, if we consider God's cove- "nant with Abraham, in which he promised to be a "God to him and to his seed; and God's covenant "at Mount Sinai in which he took the whole nation "to be his peculiar people:—from which he calls "himself the Lord their God:—and on account of "which he is called their God: and on account of "which he is called their husband, and they are said "to be married to him, and are charged with whore- "dom and adultery for going after other gods; and "are invited to return to him as a wife to her husband, "and to call him their God and Father. Not that "they had any title to pardon, grace and glory, while "uncircumcised in heart†."

We answer by observing, in the first place, that, in these words, "Not that they had any title to pardon, "grace and glory," Mr. Bellamy either means to deny, what his opponents really hold, that, when the Lord says, *I am the Lord thy God*, he makes an external grant or free offer of himself, as a God in Christ, to unregenerate men; or to insinuate that the doctrine of his opponents flatters unregenerate men, continuing such; as if they were already actually intitled to the blessings of pardon, grace and glory. In the former sense, Mr. Bellamy only denies what he had undertaken to confute; the latter, he is chargeable with calumny. In the next place, it is observable, that, when Mr. Ballamy admits, that the covenant, into which God took the whole nation of Israel, as his peculiar people, was that,

† Dialogue 2d. p. 57, 59.

covenant, which he made with Abraham, and in which he promised to be a God to him and to his seed,—he establishes the argument of his opponents: for it cannot be denied, that when God said to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee*, the patriarch was warranted, immediately upon the footing of that declaration, to believe in God as his own God and everlasting portion; and therefore the Israelites, by the same declaration made to each of them, had a sufficient warrant for the same belief. This declaration was, indeed, of no saving advantage to those who continued in unbelief. But to them who understood and believed it in truth, it was an infallible conveyance of a saving interest in God as their God in Christ. Hence this declaration is proposed as the ground upon which they were to return to the Lord, Ps. lxxxi. 9, 10, 11. *Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel if thou wilt hearken unto me. There shall no strange God be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any strange God. I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.* The object, which is thus proposed to faith, as every way sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul, cannot be merely the external relation of God to the visible church; it can be nothing less than the grant or offer of God to be our Redeemer, Sanctified and everlasting Portion. The faith of this declaration is represented as influencing a thorough return to him, Jerem. iii. 22. *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* But we need not dispute long here; since our Saviour has condescended to assure us, that a happy and glorious resurrection, and consequently all the blessings of eternal life, are contained in the import of this declaration, as it was made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *As touching the resurrection of the dead*, said Christ to the Sadducees,

have ye not read, that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Mr. Bellamy seems to grant, that the same covenant of promise, of which this declaration was a principal part, was made with Abraham and afterwards with Israel; and indeed it cannot be denied, since the promise runs in the same terms to him and to his seed. Hence we infer, that, as this declaration, when made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, afforded a sufficient ground for the faith of eternal life; so it did, as made to Israel; and so it does still, as made to the visible church.

The truth is, the effect of this declaration made to a people and publickly assented to by them in their united capacity, is, that they, as a visible church, are brought to stand in an external covenant-relation to the Lord. But the effect of the same declaration received into the heart of an individual by faith, is an actual or special interest in God as his own God in Christ. As the spiritual whoredom, with which God charged Israel, was not merely the outward worship of idols; but the heart-attachment of individuals to them; so the exercise, to which the Lord promised to bring them, was not only that they should acknowledge their external relation to God, as his visible church; but also that multitudes of individuals amongst them, should be brought to say, every one for himself, by a faith of God's operation, *Ishi*, my husband, *the Lord is my God.*

5. In the fifth place, we have a solid ground for the appropriating persuasion which belongs to the nature of saving faith in such calls and invitations of the gospel, as the following: Prov. viii. 4. *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of Adam.* Isai. lv. 1, 2.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not! Revel. xxii. 17. *The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth, say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely**. Matth. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* In these and other passages of the same import, three things are particularly to be observed. The first is, Who are the persons invited. They are men, the sons of Adam, who have no money,—who spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not,—who are ready to sink under the burden of the guilt and power of sin. Are not these characters applicable to any poor sinner that hears the gospel? The second thing to be considered is, what these persons are invited to receive; Christ and his benefits, set forth under the names of wine and milk,

* **Answer.** It is granted, that none actually receive the water of life but such as are made willing to do so. But it does not follow, that the call or invitation and the promise implied in it are exhibited and directed to no other. Nay, they are exhibited and directed to all the hearers of the word; in order that those, who are ordained to eternal life, may believe; and in order that the obstinate unbelief of others may be manifestly inexcusable. Nor does human language afford words more expressive of such an unlimited grant than the words of the text. If there were a company of people to whom a generous person should present something as a free gift, making every one of them all welcome to it immediately or without requiring any previous condition, what words could he make use of more proper to express his design, than these words of the Holy Spirit, *Whosoever will, let him take freely*. The Lord hereby calls every one to be willing to take freely; for he that seriously calls whosoever will to take any thing freely, calls them, whom he addresses, to be willing to do so, willingness being essentially included in the act of taking.

of that which is good, of rest to the soul, of the water of life. The third thing is, how persons of the description just now mentioned, are invited to receive Christ and his saving benefits according to these invitations; namely, by faith, or by believing the free promise supposed or implied in each of these invitations. It is evidently the property of this faith, that by it persons take to themselves the good which is presented to them in these invitations as a free gift; and that they do so immediately, no previous recommending qualifications being required of them; and no qualification pleasing to God being attainable by them otherwise than in and by receiving what is presented to them in these invitations.

The infinite Majesty of Heaven condescends not only to invite, but to beseech or intreat poor sinners to receive the reconciliation. 2 Corinth. v. 20. *We are embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled unto God.* "In these words," says Mr. Bellamy, "you "are invited to be reconciled to God, and not to be- "lieve, that God is reconciled to you*." But if we are not to believe that God is reconciled to us, how are we to believe the revelation which God makes of himself, according to the preceding and following verses? In these verses he reveals himself as *in Christ reconciling* a guilty *world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;* as having *made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* The reconciliation to God, to which we are pressed with so much earnestness, proceeds upon a view of God as in Christ; that is, as having received a sufficient satisfaction to his incensed justice,

* Dialogue ii. p. 64.

and as therefore affording us a sufficient ground to trust in him for the pardon or non-imputation of our sins.

It is necessary to add with regard to these invitations, that being proclaimed in the name of the Most High God, they carry in them all the authority of his command: which is formally expressed in many places of scripture, particularly in 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ:* A command, which, as Mr. Hervey well observes, is "the most important that ever issued "from the throne of glory. If this be neglected no "other can be kept; if this be observed, all others will "be easy."

Objection. "The gospel is a feast freely provided, "and sinners of mankind are freely invited to partake "of it. There is no mention of any gift or grant dis- "tinct from this; but this itself is a ground sufficient. "Those, who were persuaded to embrace the invita- "tions, are not described as coming to make a claim of "it as their property; but as gratefully accepting of it."

Answer. This objection allows, that sinners of mankind are invited to partake of the gospel feast, which is Jesus Christ and all spiritual blessings in him. But it is plain, that every invitation of this kind implies a grant or promise, which gives the persons invited a right to use the provisions of the feast for all the purposes specified in the invitation; and to claim them as their property for these purposes. The grant or promise thus implied in the invitation is either free or suspended upon some condition. If it be suspended upon some condition then the persons invited cannot make their claim to the provisions, till that condition be ful-

filled. But if it be free and unconditional, they have a sufficient warrant to make their claim immediately. Here then is the difference between those who contend, that an appropriation of Christ, grounded singly upon the gospel-offer, belongs to the nature of saving faith, and their opponents. The former hold, that the grant or promise implied in the invitations of the gospel, is free; or, in other words, that it is such as warrants any perishing sinner of mankind, immediately upon hearing it, to rest upon it for his own everlasting salvation. Whereas the latter deny, that he has any warrant to do so till he find that he has come up to the terms or conditions required. The ground of the sinner's trust in Christ for salvation, according to the former scheme, is the promise alone. But the ground of his trust, according to the latter scheme, is partly the promise, and partly something that he feels or does, considered as the condition of the promise. Faith, according to the one doctrine, proceeds only upon what is without us; but, according to the other, it necessarily proceeds in some measure, upon something within us.

The act of receiving Christ and his benefits cannot be separated from the persuasion, that they are ours by virtue of the grant in the gospel promise; because though there may be a giving, where there is no receiving, as we have seen; yet there can be no receiving of Christ without a previous giving of him, John iii. 27. *A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.* Any pretended receiving of Christ, which proceeds not upon a view of the divine grant of him in the gospel, is nothing but hypocrisy and presumption. A person may take a commodity as a thief or a robber; but not as an honest man, till he can claim it as his

own by donation, by purchase, or upon some other lawful ground.

The assertion, "that there is no mention in the "scripture of any gift or grant of Christ distinct from "the gospel invitation," is true, if it mean, that the free grant which God makes of Christ to sinners, is implied in every gospel invitation. But it is a gross falsehood, if it mean, either that there is no such grant, or that it is not distinctly expressed in various places of scripture.

Objection. "In what sense may a gospel-hearer "call salvation by Jesus Christ his own? He is freely invited to partake of it: that is all. It is not so "his own, but that he may ultimately be debarred from "possessing it. But in whatsoever sense it is his own, "that is the only sense in which he is warranted to believe it to be so."

Answer. We have already observed, that a free invitation to a feast implies a free promise, which gives the persons invited a sufficient ground to call the feast their own, according to the import of that promise; as much their own, as if they had procured the intertainment with their own money. A persuasion that it is theirs in this sense is implied in their compliance with the invitation, in their coming to and partaking of the feast. Such is the sense in which the gospel promise affords every sinner of mankind, who hears it, a ground to believe that salvation by Jesus Christ is his. In both cases, it is not the right of persons, as only exhibited in the invitation, that makes them actual partakers of the provision; because to such as disbelieve and reject this right, it is as if it had no existence. But when their right is actually believed and improved, then they

cannot fail to be actual partakers, unless the inviter be deficient in faithfulness or ability. This deficiency is supposable in the case of men who invite their neighbours to an earthly feast; but not in the case of the great God who calls us to Christ in the gospel. Hence when this right is duly apprehended, under the influence of the spirit of faith, it secures the person so apprehending it from all danger of being debarred from the possession of the promised salvation. In the case of an earthly feast, it is indeed one thing for persons to believe or trust in the promise of the inviter, and another thing to exert bodily strength in coming to such a place, in eating and drinking. But with regard to the spiritual feast to which we are invited in the gospel, our trust in the promise of God in Christ as directed to us, and our coming to partake of Christ as the food of our souls, are but different views of one and the same thing.

There are few religious controversies in which a greater want of candour appears, than in the opposition which has been made to the doctrine of Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston and others, concerning the nature of that faith in Jesus Christ to which the hearers of the gospel are called. According to this doctrine, says one, "the "the unregenerate are called to conclude themselves "interested in the righteousness of Jesus, while ad- "hering to their own righteousness as the ground of "acceptance with God:" just as if calling sinners, as Mr. Marshal and Mr. Boston do, to believe the righteousness of Christ to be so presented to them in the grant and promise of the gospel, as to warrant each of them to trust in it assuredly for his own justification before God; were the same thing with calling them to conclude themselves savingly interested in the righteous-

ness of Christ, or already in a justified state; and as if the believing claim which sinners are directed by these divines to make to the righteousness of Christ, as their only justifying righteousness, were not as inconsistent with any dependence on their own righteousness for their acceptance with God; as it would be for the same person to go towards the north and south poles at the same time.

"This faith," says Mr. Bellamy, meaning that which is taught by Mr. Marshal, Mr. Hervey and others, "is founded wholly in a heated imagination." To this we may reply in the words of Dr. Owen. "We "know," says he, "that if a man promise us any thing "seriously and solemnly, which is absolutly in his "power, we trust to his word or believe him, con- "sidering his wisdom, honesty and ability. This we "know is not a mere fixing of the imagination, but is "a real and useful confidence or trust. And whereas "God hath given us great and precious promises, and "that under several confirmations, especially that of "his oath and covenant, if we do really believe their "accomplishment; and that it shall be to us accord- "ing to his word, upon the account of his veracity, "power, righteousness and holiness; why shall this "be accounted a fanatical fixing of the imagination. "If it be so, it was so in Abraham, our example, "Rom. iv. 19, 20, 21. But this blasphemous figment "is designed for the overthrow of the way of life and "salvation by Jesus Christ. God gives us great and "precious promises, that, by them, we might be made "partakers of a Divine nature. These promises he "requireth us to receive and to mix them with faith; "that is, trusting to and resting on his Divine power "and veracity, ascribing unto him thereby the glory of

" them; to believe that the things promised unto us " shall be accomplished, which is the mean of God's " appointment, whereby we shall be made partakers " of them. Such was the faith of Abraham so highly " celebrated by the apostle; such was all the true and " saving faith that ever was in the world from the " foundation of it."

LETTER IV.

On some Queries proposed by Mr. Bellamy.

WHEN a writer or speaker pretends to determine a controverted point by proposing queries, it is often the design of such queries to insinuate some prejudice, and to make us overlook the considerations which are most necessary to a right judgment of the matter in question. Hence, though Mr. Bellamy's queries be materially answered in the two preceding letters, yet it may be instructive to consider them particularly, as an example of the artifices, that are made use of, to preclude the most salutary truths from any candid hearing or impartial examination.

QUERY I. " Did God ever require any of the sons " of Adam to believe any proposition to be true; unless " it was in fact true before he believed. We are re- " quired to believe, that there is a God,—that Christ is " the Son of God,—that he died for sinners,—that he " that believeth shall be saved,—that he that believeth " not shall be damned,—that without holiness no man " shall see the Lord. We are required to believe all

" the truths taught in the Bible. But they are all true, " before we believe them, and whether we believe them " or not."

ANSWER. The occasion of this query is the following words in the explication of the tenth direction in Mr. Marshal's Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification. " The reason," says he, " why we are to assure our- " selves in our faith, that God freely giveth Christ and " salvation to us particularly, is not, because it is a " truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a " certain truth when we believe it, and because it will " never be true, except we do, in some measure, " persuade and assure ourselves that it is so." In opposition to this passage Mr. Bellamy asserts, " that " God never requires us to believe any thing but what " is true, before we believe it, and whether we believe " it or not." And it is granted to Mr. Bellamy, that God never requires us to believe any speculative proposition, such as those recited in the query; or any absolute prediction or historical fact, but what is true, whether we believe it, or not. But saving faith, as it is distinguished from other sorts of faith, is not merely a belief of such speculative truths: because there is no such truth but what may be known and assented to by wicked men and devils. When the apostle James says, *Even the devils believe and tremble*, he undoubtedly admits, that they may assent to all the truths or propositions contained in the scriptures. In this sense, it has been justly said, *That true justifying faith is not simply the believing of any sentence that is written or can be thought upon.* So the persuasion, *that Christ is mine*, which we consider as belonging to the nature of saving faith, is not properly speaking, a belief of this proposition, *That Christ is mine*, as if it were formally,

or, in so many words, contained in scripture; but it is the necessary import of that receiving or taking of Christ to myself, which is answerable to and warranted by the free grant of him in the gospel, directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely. In this believing, however, *that Christ is my own Saviour*, I am no more chargeable with believing a lie; than I am in believing, that, when a friend gives me a book or any other valuable article, I have a right by virtue of his gift, to consider it, to take and use it, as my own; though it be certain, that, if I finally despise and reject his gift, it neither is, nor ever will be mine. Farther, if the gospel be considered as a free promise of Christ and his benefits; then this persuasion, *that Christ is mine*, is undoubtedly the import of my faith or belief of that promise as directed to me. And yet, though this promise be directed to all the hearers of the word, none of them, in the event, will find Christ to be theirs, excepting those that believe: because faith is the only way or mean by which God hath appointed them to attain a saving interest in, or the actual possession of, what he hath promised in the gospel. Hence the apostle warns those to whom this promise is left, of the danger of coming short of it, Heb. iv. 1. It may be useful to add the words of some ministers of the gospel on this subject. "There is a full warrant," say they, "to believe, or general right of access to "Christ by faith, which all the hearers of the gospel "have before they believe, and whether ever they be- "lieve or not; and, in this respect, the provision of "the New Covenant is *their own mercy:* which war- "rant or right, faith believes and improves. Yet faith "is not a mere believing of an interest which the per- "son had before;—but it is also a believing of a new

" interest in Christ and his blood ; or a persuasion, by
" which a person appropriates to himself what lies in
" common upon the field of the gospel. All the privi-
" liges and blessings of the New Covenant are gene-
" rally and indefinitely set forth by the gospel, upon
" this very design,—That each person who hears it may
" take all to himself, in the way of believing ; as there
" cannot otherwise be any proper entertainment given
" to the gospel. An indefinite declaration is made of
" God's name as THE LORD OUR GOD, and of Christ's
" name as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and all
" covenant blessings are presented to us in absolute
" promises ; all which is certainly for being believed.
" But every person is to believe for himself, not for ano-
" ther. It is a mock faith, if a person believes only
" that some *others* have a saving interest in God and
" Christ and the promises ; as he hath no business about
" making this particular application to others. So that
" he is still a rejecter of the whole, if he do not believe
" with an appropriation of the whole to himself; whilst
" the revelation of grace is made to him for this pur-
" pose, or for none at all."

" Such is the wonderful power and privilege which
" God bestows on true faith,—that he makes all to be
" personally and savingly a man's own : just as the
" man is taking all to himself, and making all his own,
" by an appropriating persuasion of faith*."

QUERY II. Are not all these truths contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which it is necessary for us to know and believe in order to our salvation?—But are they not all true, before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not?

* Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. 2d p. 169, 170.

ANSWER. Mr. Bellamy here insinuates, that Mr. Marshal, Mr. Hervey and others, when they call sinners to believe the grant and promise of Christ in the gospel with application to themselves, require them to believe something which is not contained in the scriptures. Now, that something must be either the sinner's application of the gospel-promise to himself, or his warrant to make that application. As to the *former*, that is, the sinner's application of the gospel-promise to himself; it is as absurd to speak of its being contained or not contained in the scriptures, as it would be to speak of his praying, of his reading or hearing the word, or any other of his transient actions being contained, or not contained therein. As to the *latter*, namely, the sinner's warrant to make an application of the gospel-promise to himself immediately, or before he find in himself certain evidences of his vital union to Christ; Mr. Bellamy should not have taken it for granted, that there is no such warrant in scripture, after so many passages of scripture expressing that warrant had been produced and urged by his opponents. This warrant is, indeed, as clearly contained in the Scripture, as if the sinner's name and sirname had been mentioned. God says, *The promise is to you; the word of salvation is sent to you.* The characters of those, to whom the promises and invitations of the gospel are directed, belong to you: for they are addressed to the sons of Adam, Prov. viii. 4. to those that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, Is. xlvi. 12. to those who labour in vain, Is. lv. 1, 2, 3. to every comer, John vi. 37. We hope this warrant is shewn satisfactorily in the preceding letter.

QUERY III. "Is it safe to venture our souls on "the truth of a proposition no where contained in the

"Bible, namely, Theron, Christ died for thee. Is "this proposition contained in the Bible? Is it taught "in Scripture? If it had been, would it not have been "true, before it was believed, and whether it was be-"lieved or not? If Theron venture his soul upon the "truth of this proposition, and find himself at last "deceived, can he blame the Bible? Was it contained "in that book? Did he learn it thence? Nay, he owns "he did not. But then he thinks, God has required "him to work up himself to such a belief, and pro-"mised, that according to his faith, so shall it be unto "him. And yet owns, he has no evidence of the thing "from scripture, sense or reason."

ANSWER. The solemn manner in which Mr. Bellamy speaks here and in other places, of the unspeakable danger of deceiving our own souls, is, in itself, scriptural and highly becoming a minister of Christ: but how awfully is it abused, when it is connected with an attempt to corrupt the truth of the gospel! in such a case, it can only serve as an example of those good words and fair speeches which deceive the hearts of the simple, Rom. xvi. 18. It seems unnecessary to add to what has been already observed concerning the absurdity of what Mr. Bellamy repeats so often, namely, that the gospel-promise is not to be believed, (or, which is the same thing, depended upon) unless it would be true to us whether we believe it or not; and that our act of applying that promise to ourselves is not contained in the Bible. But Mr. Bellamy's followers might be asked, Whether it be the safer course to believe in God giving us the true bread from heaven, and to receive it thankfully in his appointed way, that is, by embracing the promise as directed to us; or to stand disputing against the propriety of God's

way of dealing with us in this matter; and alleging, that, if Christ be given to us in the promise, the exercise of faith is unnecessary and superfluous; for then the promise must be true to us, whether we believe or disbelieve it? The manifest arrogance and presumption of the latter course may well make a thinking person tremble.

Mr. Marshal, in the explication of the tenth direction in his Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, has the following words: "We have an absolute promise or "declaration in scripture, that God certainly will or "doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us "in particular, neither do we know it to be true already "by scripture or sense or reason, before we assure "ourselves absolutely of it. Yea we are without "Christ at present (or before we believe) in a state of "sin and misery." Hence Mr. Bellamy infers, that Mr. Marshal teaches us to believe without evidence from scripture, sense and reason. Mr. Marshal indeed teaches us, that, in believing, we attain a saving interest in, and the begun possession of, Christ; but that, before we believe in him, we have no evidence from scripture, sense or reason, of either of our present or future possession of him. Just as a person, in receiving a free gift presented to him, may warrantably believe it to be his own in possession; though, while he rejected the gift, he could not know either by scripture, sense or reason, that ever he would attain the possession of it. In order to make Mr. Marshal appear ridiculous, Mr. Bellamy represents him as owning, that the faith, to which he directs his readers, is totally unsupported by scripture, sense and reason. But, with the candid and judicious, the ridicule must fall upon Mr. Bellamy's grossly mistaking the sense of

the author. Mr. Marshal is so far from making such an absurd concession, that it is the design of that part of his treatise, from which the above quotation is taken, to shew that there is not only one, but many sufficient grounds in the scripture for this appropriating faith. Accordingly he evinces, with abundance of scriptural evidence, that there are sufficient grounds for this faith in the promises, calls and commands of God in his word; that it is only an appropriating faith that corresponds with the scriptural account of saving and justifying faith; that it is the faith exemplified by the professors of true godliness through the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; that it is the only faith by which we receive Christ and his salvation into our hearts, and live to him in the practice of all holy duties; and, in fine, that any pretended faith, which excludes this appropriation, shews itself to be not the faith of God's elect by the evil fruits which it produceth.

Mr. Bellamy observes that the proposition, that Christ died for Theron, is not contained in scripture: and that therefore Theron had no ground to say, in the direct act of faith, The blessed Jesus died for me. And it is granted, that if the knowledge or belief, thus expressed, mean a person's knowledge or belief, that he was one of those whom Christ intended to redeem by his death; that knowledge, however attainable it is, yet, being the same with the person's knowledge of his election, is by no means that which constitutes justifying faith. But when we believe or trust in Christ for all our salvation, it is evident, that we have a real apprehension of his death, nay, of all that he did and suffered, as for us; not meaning any immediate view of God's decree or of Christ's intention in laying down

his life; but an immediate view of his death as presently exhibited to us in such a manner, as to warrant our entire dependence upon it as the meritorious and procuring cause of all our salvation. When a traveller goes into a house and eats the food set before him; he may justly say, This food is for me, both as being suitable to my present need, and as being now freely given to me, without any regard to what particular persons the people of the house might have had in view, when they prepared that food*.

QUERY IV. "Did God ever require any one of "the sons of Adam to believe any thing to be true, "without sufficient previous evidence, that it was true? "Look through the Bible. Where shall we find one "instance? Not in the Old Testament—nor in the "New Testament—no, not even in one of these parti-

* In Dr. Preston's treatise of faith we have the following paraphrase of our Lord's commission to his apostles and with them to the ordinary ministers of the word, *Go and preach the gospel to every creature*, Mark xvi. 14. "Go and tell every man "without exception, that here is good news for him, Christ is "dead for him; and, if he will take him and except of his "righteousness, he shall have him." On this passage, quoted in the Marrow of Modern Divinity, Mr. Boston remarks, that the design of it is not to determine concerning the extent of Christ's death; but to discover the warrant sinners have to believe in Christ. Therefore Dr. Preston saith not, Tell every man, that Christ *died* for him; but, Tell every man that Christ *is dead* for him; that is, for him to come to and believe on; even as if one had said of old, Tell every man who hath slain a person unawares, that the city of refuge is for him, namely, to flee to, that he may be safe: and every one bitten by a fiery serpent, that the brazen serpent set upon a pole is for him, namely, to look to that he may be healed. Both of these were eminent types of Christ; and upon the latter the Scripture is full and clear to this very point. Numb. xxi. 8. *And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a brazen serpent and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.* John iii. 15, 16.

" culars, these writers usually refer to, to illustrate " and confirm this strange kind of assurance."

ANSWER. With regard to the charge, which Mr. Bellamy brings against his opponents, of calling men to believe without sufficient previous evidence, enough has been said already. The sneering way in which he repeats an expression which had been used by Mr. Marshal in a grave and serious manner, is very unbecoming. What Mr. Marshal meant by that expression was, that the assurance of faith, like other things of the Spirit of God, is *a strange thing* to natural men: and, by reason of mens natural bias towards the old covenant way of obtaining life, they reject the way of receiving spiritual blessings by believing the free promise of God in Christ, as absurd. Hence we need not wonder, that many reckon, that we bring strange things to their ears, when we say, that it is the immediate duty of sinners to believe the gospel-promise as directed to themselves; and yet allow, that, while they do not believe it, there is no manner of evidence, that it will ever be actually fulfilled in their case. Several instances, however, are given by Mr. Marshal and others, as, in this respect, parallel or very similar to that of this faith in the gospel-promise; Abraham's believing the promise that God gave him about a son in his old age; the faith which the generation of Israel that came out of Egypt ought to have had in the promise of the land of Canaan; David's faith in the promise of his advancement to the kingdom of Israel; the faith of miracles; and, particularly, that which Peter exercised in walking upon the water. Let us see how Mr. Bellamy deals with these instances in order to shew that they are no way to the purpose of his opponents.

With regard to Abraham's faith, he observes, that "he had sufficient evidence for the thing he believed, "even the known, the plain, the express promise of "the God of truth." This assertion of Mr. Bellamy is unquestionably true; and, in order to shew the example to be quite pertinent to the purpose of his opponents, it is only necessary to add, That there is no evidence, that ever the promise would have been verified to Abraham, or that he would have attained the promised blessing, if, instead of believing, he had despised and rejected the promise. The promise made to Abraham is precisely parallel to the gospel-promise in this respect, that it was to be verified to him by means of his faith in it. The promise given to David of his advancement to the kingdom of Israel is an example of the same kind.

With regard to the promise which the Lord gave the generation of the Israelites, who came out of Egypt, the following objection is offered to Mr. Marshal's view of it. "It is true, God absolutely promised "to plant them as a nation in the good land; and this "he performed. But he did not absolutely promise, "that every individual, who left Egypt, would be "amongst them. So far as it respected individuals, "(unless in reference to Caleb and Joshua,) the pro-"mise was not absolute."

To this objection we answer according to what was observed in the preceding letter concerning absolute promises. The promise made to Israel was absolute in the same sense in which we hold the gospel-promise to be so. The promise of eternal life, as it was made to Christ in behalf of his seed, could not fail of being accomplished. This, however, as we formerly observed, does not hinder the same promise from being pro-

posed in the outward dispensation of the gospel, as a free promise, to many who, in the event, shall come short of it and finally perish. In like manner, the promise, as it was made to Abraham and embraced by his faith, was sure to be performed to his seed sooner or later. But, as it was proposed to that body of Israelites who were numbered at their departure out of Egypt, it afforded them a sufficient ground for their trusting, that they would be brought into the good land: This appears from the terms, in which the promise was proposed to them, Exod. iii. 8, 17. *I will bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey*,—from God's saying to them, *Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb and Joshua*, Numb. xiv. 30. —from the apostle's representation of unbelief as the cause of their exclusion, Heb. iii. 19. This unbelief is not to be understood of their not believing, that the promise would be accomplished in the bringing of some future generation of the Israelites into the land of Canaan; but of their not believing, that it would be accomplished to themselves, who were numbered by Moses at their departure from Egypt. For Moses still spoke of the land of Canaan as promised to them who came out of Egypt, Numb. x. 29. *We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you.* Deuteron. i. 20. *I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up, possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee.* And their disbelief of this promise is represented in v. 32. *In this thing, ye did not believe the Lord your God.* The following observations of the judicious author of a most valuable work entitled, *Palemon's Creed examined*,

are solid. "The unbelieving Israelites, to whom the "Lord gave the promise of entering into his rest, not "only disbelieved the promise, but despised the gift, "Psal. cvi. 24. The Hebrew word there rendered "*despised*, is, in other places, justly rendered *refused* "or rejected, Jerem. vi. 30. Isai. liv. 6. Hence it is "manifest, that the promise or gift of the land of "Canaan was made even to those who were not per-"mitted to enter into it because of their unbelief; "for men cannot be said to refuse a gift which was "never offered to them. Hence, too, it is evident, "that God could not be charged with any unfaithful-"ness for not bringing them to the possession of it, "however freely promised before. Yet it is observa-"ble, that the not permitting them to enter into it had "some shew or appearance of a breach of promise. "And therefore when the Lord had threatened, that "their carcases should fall in the wilderness, he added "these remarkable words, *Ye shall know my breach of* "*promise*. Numb. xiv. 34." With regard to individuals of Israel, if we consider that the land of Canaan, made over to them in the promise, was a type and figure of heaven, and that the apostle intimates, that the gospel was preached to them, when this promise was given to them, Heb. iv. 2. It cannot well be denied, that every individual was bound to believe, or trust in the promise, as what would be fulfilled to him in bringing him to the possession of the earthly Canaan, unless God should see meet to translate him beforehand to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly was but a faint shadow. These things considered, we agree with Mr. Bellamy, that the Israelites "had sufficient evidence, that God was "able and willing to do all that he had engaged to do; "and that if they would trust his wisdom, power,

" goodness and faithfulness, and *follow him wholly*, " they might safely enter and easily conquer the coun- " try ;" that is, just what his opponents maintain, that the promise of the good land would have been verified to that generation of Israel, if they had believed it ; but that they could not enter in because of their unbelief.

Mr. Bellamy allows, " that the Jews in Babylon " had a good warrant to trust in the Lord, who was " able, and who had expressly and absolutely promised " at the end of seventy years to bring them back."

Concerning this assurance which the Lord gave his people of their return from the Babylonish captivity, we observe, that it may be considered both as a prediction of a future event, and also as a promise given for the support and comfort of his people. It is in the latter point of view, not in the former, that this assurance is to be considered as parallel or similar to the gospel-promise. As a prediction, it might be believed by the devils themselves. But, as a promise, it was to be received by faith and pleaded in prayer. So much is intimated in that promise, as it is expressed in Jerem. xxix. 10, 12, 13. Accordingly towards the end of the seventy years, it was the mind of the Lord's people, particularly of Daniel, that faith and prayer were necessary means of obtaining the promised deliverance, Dan. ix. 2, 3.

Mr. Bellamy observes, " that those who had the " faith of miracles, and could say to this mountain, " *Be thou removed and cast into the sea*,—had sufficient " evidence to believe that it would be done, resulting " from Christ's express promise in the case." But this observation does not at all affect Mr. Marshal's

argument, while it does not appear that that promise would have been verified in the working of miracles by any of the apostles as moral instruments, if they had not believed it, Matth. xxi. 21. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith and doubt not, —ye shall say to this mountain, &c.* From other passages we learn, that, even in those upon whom miracles were to be wrought, faith in the promise was required in order to their having the benefit of the miracle, Matth. ix. 28, 29. *Christ said to the blind men, Believe ye, that I am able to do this? According to your faith, be it unto you.* Mark v. 36. *Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue*, who had applied to him on behalf of his daughter, *Be not afraid, only believe.* Acts xiv. 9. Paul, observing the impotent man at Lystra, *perceived, that he had faith to be healed.*

It may be observed with regard to the command which Christ gave Peter to come to him on the water, that it implied, as Mr. Bellamy grants, Christ's promise of keeping Peter from sinking. But would Peter have experienced the accomplishment of this promise, if he had disbelieved it? That he would not, we are led to think from his beginning to sink, as he began to doubt, and from our Lord's reproof, which intimated that his sinking was occasioned by his doubting.

On the whole, these are undeniable instances of a Divine promise given to be believed or relied on for some benefit; which, however, was not to be attained without the belief of the promise.

What Mr. Bellamy adds about the absurdity of teaching (what he most unjustly supposes to be taught by Mr. Marshal) that "God suspends the salvation of "all mankind upon their believing a thing to be true,

" of the truth of which they have no evidence from " scripture, sense or reason; and that he sentences " men to eternal damnation for not believing what they " would be glad to believe with all their hearts;" is only remarkable as an instance of extravagant abuse.

With regard to his insinuating, that men in their natural state would be glad to believe with all their hearts what Mr. Marshal calls them to believe, we may transcribe a few words of one who preached the same doctrine on this head with Mr. Marshal: " To take " the word of God for your security," says Mr. Ralph Erskine to his hearers; " to quit the law-way of sal- " vation and flee to the gospel-promise; to trust the " faithfulness of God pledged in his promise, for your " salvation from sin and corruption as well as from hell " and damnation; to set to your seal that God is true, " and to receive his record with particular application " to yourself; if you do this, never fear, that you are " doing it by your own strength; for it is not natural, " but supernatural power by which you are so acting. " If you get a heart to embrace the promise, you may " be sure the promise is embracing you: for it is only " virtue coming out of it that enables you to embrace " it. None are willing to take the good of the promise " till God make them so. One of the great things that " makes believing so difficult, is, because we cannot " admit it into our thoughts, that salvation is to be had " at so easy a rate; the old conditional covenant of " works being so much ingrained in our nature*."

* The sense, which Luther had, of the difficulty of attaining faith's appropriation of Christ, appears from the following passage taken from his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. Discoursing on these words in Gal i. 4. *Who gave himself for our sins*, he says: " Weigh diligently every word of " Paul, and especially mark well this pronoun, *our*. For the

QUERY V. "Is not this the difference between "faith and presumption, as the words are commonly "understood among mankind, viz. that, in the one, "we believe because we have sufficient evidence; in "the other, without any evidence at all? And is it not "the constant character of all self-deceived hypocrites, "that they have a real persuasion in their heart of the "love of God to their souls and confident expectation "of eternal life without any real evidence, Matth. vii. "27. Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27. xviii. 9, 11."

ANSWER. Enough has been said about Mr. Bellamy's charge (against Mr. Marshal and others who teach the same doctrine,) of calling men to believe without evidence. But it may be of use to take notice of some differences between the doctrine, of which we speak, and presumption. Presumption rests on outward church-privileges, such as, the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments, as if they were in themselves sufficient evidences of God's special love: Hence the language of self-deceivers is, *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.* But faith seeks and finds its rest in Him who is exhibited in word and sacraments, even in Jesus Christ, as our righteousness and salva-

"effect consisteth altogether in the right application of the "pronouns; in which, as they are used in scripture, there is "often a peculiar force. Thou wilt easily say and believe, that "Christ, the son of God, was given for the sins of Peter, of "Paul, and of other saints, whom we account to have been "worthy of this grace. But it is a very hard thing, that thou, "who judgest thyself unworthy of this grace, shouldst from "thy heart say and believe, that Christ was given for thy invin-"cible, infinite and horrible sins.—Although our weak nature "read or hear this sentence, *Who gave himself for our sins*, yet "she applies not this pronoun *our* unto herself, but unto others, "who are worthy and holy. As for herself, she will tarry, till "she be made worthy with her own works."

tion. A person's opinion of his own righteousness or inherent good qualifications is the support of presumption. The language of it is, *God, I thank thee; I am not as other men. I fast, I pray, I do such and such good works.* But this is building upon the sand. When the Jews sought salvation, *as it were, by the works of the law;* they sought it not by faith: for faith builds upon no other foundation than that which God hath laid in Zion, even the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the gospel.

The claim of presumption to the promise is grounded upon something which a person supposes to be wrought in him or done by him: but faith mentions nothing, as the ground of its claim to the good of the promise, but the righteousness of Christ, the only proper, entitling, procuring condition of all the promises of the New Covenant. Presumption would take the promise without Christ: whereas faith comes to Christ in the free promise, and finds every promise to be yea and amen in him. Farther, it may be observed, that the gospel reveals a certain order in the execution and application of Christ's Prophetical, Priestly and Kingly offices. Taught by him as a Prophet, a true believer first comes to him as a Priest, for that justice-satisfying and law-magnifying righteousness, which alone is sufficient for the justification of the guilty; and then submits to him as a king, being sweetly constrained by his love to have respect to all his commandments. But this order is inverted by presumption; which pretends first to submit unfeignedly to Christ as a King and Lawgiver; and then, upon the ground of this submission, claims the benefit of his Priestly office: thus, it may be, with much seeming devotion, seeking a justifying righteousness, *as it were, by the works of the law.* How much

of this presumption is in Mr. Bellamy's scheme, which directs persons to regard the reconciliation of their heart to the law, and their consciousness of good dispositions, as the ground of their claim to Christ and his salvation, may easily be discerned. Presumption, according to the degree of it, encreases pride and self-conceit, Revel. iii. 17. Gal. vi. 3. But saving faith, according to the measure of it, promotes humility and self-abasement. In fine, true *faith worketh by love* to the person of Christ and purifies the heart, Gal. v. 6. Acts xv. 9. whereas presumption, however it may pretend to take the benefits of Christ, has no love to his person, nor regard to the glory of his name.

Query VI. "Is not this faith analogous to that "which the devil tempted our Saviour to exercise, Luke "iv. 8. Psal. xci. 11. Here was a promise, a precious "promise out of God's own word. The devil urged "our Saviour to appropriate and take it home to him-"self in particular; and be verily persuaded in his "heart, that he would be safe, although he cast him-"self down. However, on a critical examination of "the text the devil recited, there could be no evidence "from that of safety to Christ, if he had cast himself "down. So therefore he must believe really without "any evidence from scripture, sense or reason; and "the devil would have had him think, that according "to his faith, so should it be to him."

Answer. It is hard to see what pretence Mr. Bellamy had for the abuse implied in this query. Is the doctrine of his opponents, like the temptations of satan, designed to countenance or encourage immoral practices? Did they ever allow any faith to be genuine, but that which brings men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in

the present world? By no means. Mr. Marshall's treatise demonstrates, that true holiness in heart and life is not to be otherwise attained by fallen men than by that very faith, which he describes out of the holy scriptures. Again, was it the practice of Mr. Bellamy's opponents to handle the word of God deceitfully, and like satan, to mutilate texts in order to make them appear favourable to their own schemes? Mr. Bellamy's admirers may be safely challenged to produce any human writers who stand clearer of such a charge. Farther, it may be asked, how Mr. Bellamy came to represent our Saviour's appropriation of the promise in Ps. xci. 11. to himself, as any part of satan's temptation? The devil, no doubt, horribly perverted that promise by mutilating it and attempting to make it patronize a most abominable crime; but not by intimating, that Christ might consider it as a promise made to him in particular. "The devil was right," says "Mr. Henry, "in applying it to Christ; for to him all "the promises of the protection of the saints primarily "and eminently belong, and to them in and through "him." It belongs, indeed, to the craft of the old serpent to make his falsehood pass by mixing it with a good deal of truth.

QUERY VII. "If the devil attempted thus to delude "our blessed Saviour himself by misapplying a pre- "cious promise, has he not courage? has he not power? "has he not will? to attempt to delude poor sinners "in a like manner; that thereby, devil as he is, he "may accomplish their eternal ruin. For that satan "himself is transformed into an angel of light."

ANSWER. How justly may all this be retorted upon Mr. Bellamy's scheme! It is an observation of some judicious divines, that as before the fall, it was satan's

great plot to tempt man to disbelieve the threatning of the covenant of works; so it is now his great plot to tempt men to disbelieve the gospel-promise. The apostle assures us, that the god of this world blinds the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them. Now though Mr. Bellamy makes many professions of deep concern for men's salvation and for the danger of delusion; though he appears zealous for experimental religion; yet when all these things (which are in themselves commendable) are made subservient to a scheme, which debars poor sinners of mankind from any application of Christ or of the promise to themselves, till they certainly know they have the marks of regeneration; we may well be apprehensive, that, in this case, Satan is transforming himself into an angel of light; while he is taking the most effectual way to prevent persons who enjoy the gospel-dispensation from having any saving benefit by it. The plot is the deeper, that it is carried on under a plausible pretext of ardent zeal against diabolical delusion.

The divines, whom Mr. Bellamy opposes, were far from neglecting to warn men against that misapplication of the promises to which they are tempted by satan. When you flatter yourselves, they would often say to their hearers, that you have such good qualifications as entitle you to the righteousness of Christ and to the promise; when you are induced to apply the promise to yourselves, rather by an imagination of something in it suitable to your depraved inclinations or to the exaltation of corrupt self, than by any spiritual view of the glorious authority, power, righteousness, mercy and faithfulness of God shining in it; or when you apply a promise to yourselves without any regard

to the true meaning of it; or when your application of it tends to make you more secure in a sinful course; in such cases, you are chargeable with a misapplication and presumptuous abuse of the promise; an abuse which satan will not fail to promote by his delusive suggestions. "Satan's design," as Mr. Ralph Erskine observes in one of his sermons, "in bringing a pro-"mise to our mind is, to fill the soul with spiritual "pride or false peace; to make it rest in itself; and to "drive it away from its true resting-place." No human writing, abound more with salutary cautions of this sort, than those of Mr. Boston and the two Erskines.

QUERY VIII. "Did ever Christ or his apostles "define faith to be a real persuasion, that Christ died "for me in particular; and that pardon, grace and "glory are mine? They call it coming to Christ, re-"ceiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing in "Christ, believing on Christ, &c. but never call it "believing that Christ is mine, and that my sins are "forgiven. It is true, the saints in the Old Testa-"ment and in the New, usually speak the language of "assurance. And it is as true, that they had suffi-"cient evidence of their good estate from their sancti-"fication. All who pretended to belong to Christ "without this, are branded as liars, 1 John ii. 4. But "where do we ever read of their endeavoring to work "up themselves to an assurance professedly without "evidence?"

ANSWER. In what sense the expression, "Christ "died for me" may be admitted to be the language of justifying faith, was shewn in the answer to the 3d query. Mr Bellamy's charge against his opponents,

of calling men to believe without evidence, must appear, from what has been said, to be a gross misrepresentation. We have seen that the phrases which are used to denote the exercise of faith, such as, coming to Christ, receiving Christ, believeing in or on him; trusting in him, include the notion of appropriation. It cannot be shewn satisfactorily, that a person has or may have such a sure trust in Jesus Christ for his own everlasting salvation as is answerable to the gospel promise, without some real persuasion, that Christ is his own Saviour in particular. That such a persuasion belongs to the nature of saving faith has been evinced from the necessary import of the Hebrew and Greek words rendered *faith* and *believeing:* from the terms of the gospel-record or promise; and from what the scripture calls believing or trusting in the Lord. In the xxxi. Psalm, David says, *I trusted in thee, O Lord:* and then he adds, *I said, Thou art my God:* where the latter expression is an explication of the former. The apostle, in the iv. chapter of the epistle to the Romans, teacheth us, that to believe on God, in a saving manner, is to believe on him *who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.* And in another place, having said, *I delivered unto you first of all, how that Christ died for our sins;* the apostle adds, *So we preach, and so ye believe**. Where shall we find passages of scripture that shew more clearly, than these and other texts cited in the second of the preceding letters, what is it that a person believes, when he believes *to the saving of the soul?* We have seen, that the exercise of the faith of God's people, in scripture, is still expressed in the language of appropriation. But, says Mr.

* 1 Corinth. xv. 3, 11.

Bellamy, "They spake the language of assurance, "because they had sufficient evidence of their good "estate from their sanctification." But it may be asked, whether the gospel-promise be not a promise of sanctification? And, if it be so, whether we are not warranted to trust in the promise for this blessing, till we are conscious, that we have already attained it? And whether we can trust in Christ and in the promise for any blessing; without a real persuasion, that Christ is our Saviour, and that the promises are yea and amen to us in him? When Moses taught the Israelites at their coming out of Egypt, to sing, *The Lord is my strength and my salvation; he is my God;* shall we suppose, that he intended, that none should sing these words, but such as were conscious of their sanctification? This supposition must appear very unreasonable to one who considers the corrupt and degenerate state of that people, when they came out of Egypt. Even in the most thriving state of the visible church, we cannot suppose, that the generality of church-members will be so certain of the truth and sincerity of their gracious attainments as to be able, upon the ground thereof, to assert their interest in the Lord as their God. Hence it appears, that when the Lord promises to bring church-members in general to join in the exercise of calling God their God, their Husband, it is implied that they were to do so upon some other ground, than the consciousness of their own attainments; that is, upon the ground of his own free grant and promise, Hosea ii. 16, 23. Zechar. xiii. 9. The apostle Paul, in writing to the churches in his time, speaks of them as consisting of members, who called God their Father in Christ; who considered themselves as members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit.

Shall we suppose, that the apostle means, that church-members in general were then so conscious of their sanctification, that they could always found their claim to these privileges upon it? Or is it not rather evident, that he speaks of these privileges as what they received by faith in Christ, and even by the very first act of it? Hence he directs the members in general of these churches, to which he wrote, to consider themselves as partakers of these privileges and to walk according to them. He teaches them to seek the attainment of peace and joy *in* the very act of *believing*, and not merely by reflection upon that act or its effects*. Besides, if our sanctification be the only ground of the warrantable application of Christ to ourselves, then our sanctification must be the only ground of our hope. But the legalism of Mr. Bellamy's scheme may be considered more particularly afterward: and also his calumnious insinuation, that the doctrine of his opponents allows persons to conclude themselves to be in a gracious state, without any solid evidence of a work of sanctification begun in their souls.

QUERY IX. "Is there one in all St. Paul's cata-"logue of believers in Heb. xi. whose faith consisted "in believing without any evidence?"

ANSWER. Their believing was undoubtedly agreeable to Mr. Marshal's doctrine; for, when it is said, that *by faith they obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, out of weakness were made strong*; it is plainly implied, both that these things were promised; (for the promise was the ground of their faith;) and also, that there was no evidence, that they would ever have obtained

* Rom. xv. 13.

these things without faith; for that is what the apostle continually repeats through this whole chapter, that, by means of faith and not otherwise, such and such benefits were obtained.

QUERY X. "Were any awakened sinners invited "and urged to believe by Christ or his apostles; and "told, at the same time, that the thing they were to "believe was not true as yet? Nor had they any evi- "dence from scripture, sense or reason, it would ever "be true; but however most solemnly assured by the "promise and oath of God, if they would venture to "believe, without any evidence at all in the case, it "would be according to their faith.—Was this the "thing the apostles dwelt upon in all their preaching? "Was this the thing they urged awakened sinners to, "with all their might? No: they never heard of it— "neither came it into their hearts, to think that this "was justifying faith."

ANSWER. It seems unnecessary to add to what has been advanced on the subject of this query. Only it may be observed, that, if, instead of saying, "The "thing they were to believe was not true, as yet;" it had been said, The promise they were called to believe, was not verified to them, as yet; nor was there any evidence from scripture, sense or reason, that it ever would be verified; while they continued to disbelieve it;—the futility of this and indeed of most of these queries would have been obvious to many readers; who are confounded with the continual repetition of the grossly misapplied expression, *believing without evidence*. With regard to the way in which Christ and his apostles dealt with awakened sinners, it is easy to shew, that sinners in such a case were still directed

to the grant and promise of Christ immediately, Matth. xi. 28. John vi. 32. Acts ii. 39. That what is now expressed was, in effect, what Mr. Marshal intended by the words harped upon so much by Mr. Bellamy, will never be denied by such as comply with Mr. Hervey's reasonable request in his recommendatory letter concerning that excellent treatise, *The Gospel-mystery of Sanctification.* "Only," says he, "let candour, not "rigour, fill the chair, and interpret an unguarded "expression or a seemingly inconsistent sentence by "the general tenor of the discourse." The expression, however, of which we now speak, can hardly be called unguarded; as it appears to have been intended by the judicious author to set forth the mystery of saving faith in the very *peculiar manner* wherein it takes possession of the good of the promise by an act of believing. But it is insisted upon as what cannot be refused without the greatest injustice to Mr. Marshal, that this expression be interpreted according to the general tenor and design of his discourse.

QUERY XI. "Is not the thing believed a lie? It "was not true, before it was believed, as is granted. "But believing an untruth to be true cannot make it "true. It cannot according to reason: it cannot ac- "cording to scripture: it cannot according to expe- "rience. It was never known, since the world began "to produce this effect in any one instance, unless in "this case. And we have no evidence from scripture, "sense or reason that it ever did in this."

ANSWER. What is it that Mr. Bellamy calls a lie? Is it a lie, that a promise of eternal life is exhibited and directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely, to be either believed or disbelieved? Is it a lie, that this pro-

mise shall be verified in the experience of such as believe and cordially receive it; but not in the experience of those who disbelieve and reject it? Were some honest, wealthy and generous man to say to his indigent neighbour, "I sincerely make you a grant of a certain valuable estate. It is as much your own as my deed of gift can make it. All that remains in order to your actual possession of it, is, that you accept of it:" and were that neighbour to make this reply; "Sir, that estate is not mine: I despise your grant, and there is no evidence that the estate either is or ever will be mine. Therefore you bid me believe a lie:" every reasonable person would be shocked at the stupidity and baseness of such an insulting answer. And is not the same affront offered to the infinite Majesty of Heaven, to the God of all grace, when the call he gives poor sinners to believe the gospel-promise with application to themselves, is represented as a call to believe a lie? This is, indeed, the sin of unbelief, which makes God a liar, 1 John v. 10, 11.

It may be added here, that such is the high import of this call, (though it be a most glorious display of the Divine condescension) that our falling in with it necessarily implies a supernatural work of the Holy Ghost, bringing us to renounce all carnal and legal confidences; to discern the wisdom, holiness, mercy and faithfulness of God in the gospel-promise exhibiting Christ and his benefits; to discern, also, our right of applying that promise to ourselves without any hazard of vitious intromission; and to embrace and take it home to ourselves as both true and good; as the everlasting rest of our souls. To represent persons who are truly brought to this holy and spiritual exercise as only flattering

themselves with a gross lie, is turning the glory of God's people into shame with a witness.

QUERY XII. "Is it not astonishing and one of the "most unaccountable things in the world, that a ra- "tional creature, with the Bible in his hands, should "ever be able to work up himself to believe what he "knows is not yet true; and what he knows he has "no evidence, that it ever will be true. No wonder "these men are so much troubled with doubts. No "wonder they are afraid, they believe a lie. No won- "der, they are obliged to strive and struggle against "this unbelief, a kind of unbelief we no where read "of in the Bible: a kind of conflict no saint ever had, "that stands on record; as themselves are obliged to "own. To struggle daily to believe without any evi- "dence from scripture, sense and reason! As nothing "can be plainer than that we ought never to believe "any thing with more confidence, than in exact pro- "portion to our evidence; to do otherwise is the most "presumptuous thing in the world; and to think, by "being thus strong in the faith, we shall give glory to "God, is the very first born of delusion, that even "Satan himself ever begot in the heart of a fallen "creature."

ANSWER. While the charge, against Mr. Marshal and others, of teaching men to believe without any evidence, is founded, as we have seen, in the most gross misrepresentation, the passionate aggravations of that charge serve only to expose the folly of the accuser. It seems unncessary to add to what has been already advanced on the subject of this query. A remark, however, in opposition to the reproach cast upon the doctrine of Mr. Marshal, Mr. Hervey and others,

may not be improper. It may be observed, that, were we to believe the gospel-promise, according to the degree of evidence attending it, that is, according to the ground we have to believe it, our persuasion of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ would exclude all fear and doubting. It is true, there is often much doubting in the believer; but that is to be imputed, not to any defect in the evidence attending the grant or promise of Christ in the external dispensation of the gospel, but only to remaining unbelief and other corruptions, according to such passages of scripture as the following, Psal. lxxvii. 9, 10. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? I said, This is mine infirmity.* Matth. xiv. 31. *Jesus said unto Peter, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Hence the believer is represented as wrestling against perplexing doubts and fears, Psal. xlii. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Hence it is nothing against the faith inculcated by Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey, that those, who have it, are sensible of remaining doubts, are humbled for them, and wrestle against them, often crying out with the father of the child, in Mark ix. 24. *Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief.*

LETTER V.

Of Mr. Bellamy's account of Saving Faith.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

HAVING considered Mr. Bellamy's objections against the doctrine of Mr. Hervey, Mr. Marshal and others, who hold that there is an appropriation of Christ to ourselves in the nature of saving faith, we are now to enquire into Mr. Bellamy's own opinion concerning the nature of saving faith. From the unrelenting severity with which he condemns the labours of others on this subject, we are led to expect a satisfactory determination from himself. But his greatest admirers will hardly say, that there is any thing on this subject in all his letters, dialogues and essays, answerable to such an expectation. He says many things concerning true faith, such as, that it is an holy act; that it is wholly founded in that revelation which is made in the written word; that it is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit; that it is always attended with love to God arising from a sense of the amiableness of his infinite perfections; that the believer is thereby united to Jesus Christ, as the branch to the vine; that men's backwardness to the exercise of true faith arises from a worldly and self-righteous spirit. These words, taken by themselves, are sound words that cannot be condemned; and had he proved any one of these unquestionable properties of saving faith to be inconsistent with the doctrine of his opponents, he would have justified his opposition to them. But

with candid and judicious readers the bare assertion of that inconsistency, without proof, will pass for nothing but calumny.

In the second of Mr. Bellamy's Dialogues we meet with the following passage.* "Let me tell you the inspired apostles," (he might have added, Mr. Hervey, Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston, and others,) "verily be- "lieved, that, in the written word, we have, not only "full evidence of the truth of the gospel itself, John "xx. 31. but also, the truth of the gospel being seen, "sufficient encouragement to come unto God through "Christ, in full assurance of being accepted through "him, Heb. x. 19, 22." Now these words, in the most natural construction of them, import nothing less than a real persuasion, that God is reconciled to us through Christ; for, unless we have this persuasion, we cannot have a full assurance of being accepted: and this persuasion is here represented as proceeding immediately upon "the truth of the gospel being "seen." One should think, this expression plainly supposes, that any sinner of mankind has a sufficient warrant to believe or trust in the Lord Jesus for his present acceptance with God; and to do so immediately upon the "truth of the gospel being seen;" that is, upon no other ground than what the gospel offer or promise affords. This is exactly Mr. Marshal's doctrine.

But that Mr. Bellamy was far from resting in this simplicity, appears from his explanation of the encouragement which the gospel affords us to come to God through Christ, in the three following particulars: "1. That God, of his own mere motion, has given his

* Page 71.

" Son to die for such an ill-deserving world as this. " 2. That God can consistently with the honour of " himself, his law and government, pardon those, who " are infinitely ill-deserving, through Jesus Christ his " Son. 3. That it is the revealed will of God, that even " the vilest and the worst should repent and be convert- " ed; should return home to God through Jesus Christ. " A clear view and firm belief of these plain gospel " truths, gives him the fullest assurance, that he *may* " return home to God; that it is God's will, he should; " and that God stands ready to accept him through " Jesus Christ, if he does."* With regard to the propositions here stated by Mr. Bellamy, it may be observed, that the first two are allowed to be precious truths; but they are only such as many Arminians have admitted, who take the gospel offer to be a new covenant of works, proposing such terms or conditions of life, as they suppose to be more accommodated, than those of the old covenant, to the present weakness of human nature. As to the third, when it is stated as the ground of our faith of salvation through Jesus Christ, it appears to be highly exceptionable. For, in the first place, it is not properly and strictly speaking gospel at all: but only a proposal of a duty of the law. Secondly, it inverts the gospel order: for according to that order, pardon and acceptance with God, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone, are the means of our return to God: but, according to Mr. Bellamy's proposition, our return to God is the means of obtaining acceptance with him.

But some will say, the return to God, of which Mr. Bellamy speaks, is not a legal, but an evangelical work:

* Dial. 2d. page 71, 72.

a return home to God by Jesus Christ. We answer, that whatever Mr. Bellamy meant by this expression, he could not mean, that we are to believe our acceptance with God through Jesus Christ, in order to our return to God; for, according to him, our return is the previous condition, upon which God's acceptance of us is suspended. "God," says he, "stands ready to ac- "cept a sinner, *if* he return." But all our works, legal and evangelical, are, by the word of God, excluded from being conditions of our justification or acceptance with God. *God imputeth righteousness without works.* Thirdly, all the faith, which is warranted by the last of Mr. Bellamy's propositions just now recited, (being only a belief, that returning to God, through Jesus Christ, is a duty of God's law; and that whosoever performs this duty rightly, shall be accepted with God through Jesus Christ) is nothing* which requires the special and saving operation of the Holy Spirit to the production of it. There is no exercise, here, of a poor sinner, who finds himself naked and exposed to God's everlasting wrath, betaking himself to the law-magnifying and justice-satisfying righteousnes of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only ground of pardon and acceptance with God; no exercise of a person, sensible of his utter inability to return unto God, looking to the Lord Jesus for heart-turning grace. The truth is, the account, which is here given by Mr. Bellamy of saving faith, is so lame, that it requires the addition of love, repentance or something else, to give it the appearance of a grace of the Holy Spirit. For nothing is more certain, than that the belief of such propositions as these three of Mr. Bellamy, is nothing more than what may be found in wicked men and even devils. Hence, in dispu-

* In merely believing, that this proposition is true.

ting against the faith taught by Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervy, he often introduces something about love to God on account of his infinite amiableness; as if he found fault with these authors for not mentioning the love of God in their definition of faith; or as if he agreed with the Papists in supposing that love, or a disposition to good works, is the form (as they used to speak) of faith, or that which makes it a living faith. But this leads to the erroneous opinion, that a living faith differs not, in its own nature, from a dead faith; but only as it is accompanied with love or repentance. While we firmly maintain that it is by no means true faith, which is not accompanied with a supreme love to God for his infinitely glorious excellencies, and with sincere love to men for his sake; and also with gospel repentance; yet we hold that love and repentance are graces of the Spirit, which, in their formal nature, are distinct from faith. They are enumerated as distinct things, 1 Corinth. xiii. 13. *Now abideth these three, faith, hope, love.* Acts xx. 21. *Testifying repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* Love and repentance are represented as fruits of faith, 1 Timothy i. 5. *The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* Zech. xii. 10. *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him.* We are said to receive Christ, and to be justified before God by faith, but not by love or by repentance. In a word, we hold, that saving faith, is, in itself and abstracting from all its concomitant and effects, what none can attain without the special supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling.

What is farther proposed in this letter, is to shew more particularly, that we have too much reason to re-

ject Mr. Bellamy's doctrine concerning saving faith, on three accounts; because it misrepresents the gospel; because it contradicts the scriptural notion of faith as a receiving grace; and because it fosters one of the most dangerous evils of our depraved nature.

First, with regard to the gospel, it is made up, according to Mr. Bellamy, of two things: One is, the revelation of certain abstract truths; such as, that God, of his own mere motion, gave his Son to die for those that are infinitely ill-deserving; and that he can consistently with the honour of his law save such through Jesus Christ his Son. The other thing is a declaration, that God is ready to be reconciled to the sinner, *upon* condition of the sinner's return to him. There are no promises of the gospel, according to this author, *but* what are suspended upon the condition of some moral good wrought in us or done by us; and consequently none which a sinner, unconscious of such goodness in himself, has any immediate access to believe or embrace, as directed to him.

But this is, by no means, a just representation of the gospel of our salvation. For, in the first place, the gospel is not merely a proposal of some abstract or *historical* truths to be believed. For when such truths concerning the person and office of Jesus Christ are *declared* as good news to sinners, there is always implied and often expressed, as was shewn before in the *third* letter, a free promise of salvation through his name. Thus, when the apostles taught, that Jesus is *the* true Messiah, they declared, at the same time, that he is the promised seed, in whom *all the families or kindreds of the earth were to be blessed*, Acts iii. 25. When they bore testimony that he died and rose again,

they likewise preached through his death and resurrection the forgiveness of sins. Nor, in the second place, are the promises of God in Christ exhibited and offered to us in the gospel dispensation to be considered as conditional; but rather as absolutely free to us, the proper condition of them all having been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ in his obedience unto death: a position which was vindicated in the third letter, and which appears to be sufficiently confirmed by this one consideration; That whatever morally good qualifications have been represented as conditions of the promises, are secured in the promises themselves. Thus, faith is a promised blessing, *In his name shall the Gentiles trust. They shall say, the Lord is my God.* Repentance, *They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn*: Love, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart to love the Lord thy God.* Acceptable obedience to God's law, *I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments and do them.* The fear of the Lord and perseverance in a holy practice unto the end. *I will put my fear into thy heart that thou mayest never depart from me.*

We allow, that the word *gospel* is often taken, in a large sense for the gospel dispensation, including all the commands and threatenings of the law, as these are subservient to the design of the exhibition of the gospel-promise. But when we speak of the gospel, as contradistinguished from the law and as the formal ground of saving faith; then it is no other than a revelation of Jesus Christ, including a free promise of everlasting salvation through his name. The confounding of these two senses seems to be what the papists intended, when they taught, that faith justifies as well

by believing the threatenings, the commands and histories of the word, as by believing the promises. This opinion was resolutely opposed by our reformers. For, said they, the life which faith seeks in God is not to be found in the commands of the word or in the threatenings of punishment, but only in an absolutely free promise; for a conditional promise offers life to those only, who see or feel that they have it in themselves already*. If we would have a firm and unshaken faith, we must build upon those promises of God in which he regards not our worth but our misery; upon his mercy, as revealed in the free message of reconciliation; That *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* A person is not to be called a true believer, because he believes, that the commands of God are just, and his threatenings true; but rather because he apprehends Christ as exhibited in the free promise. Such were the principles upon which our reformers opposed the papists on this head.

Unless the gospel, strictly taken, were such as we have now described it; that is, unless it were a free unconditional promise of salvation through Jesus Christ; it would be no gospel, no glad tidings, to fallen man; who, being dead in trespasses and sins, has no disposition or ability to will or do what is spiritually good. To tell persons in such a case, that they must acquire some good qualifications or perform some conditions, before they have a warrant to look for any benefit from Christ as their Saviour, is as impertinent,

* Promissio conditionalis, says Calvin, qua ad opera nostra remittimur, non aliter vitam promittit, quam si perspicuus esse in nobis sitam. Vide Institut. lib. iii. cap. 2d. sect. 29.

as it would be to tell a paralytick, unable to move a hand or a foot, that he might be cured, if he would walk several miles to a certain skilful physician. But some will be ready to say, Is not your own doctrine attended with the same absurdity; since men, in their natural state, are incapable even of that apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and of that believing application of the free promise, which you allow to be necessary. Answer. The gospel, strictly taken, is adapted to the case of impotent sinners, in regard that it has no commands: for here God hath promised to give us all things belonging to our salvation, not excepting faith itself, freely for the sake of his beloved Son. And though the law, in subservience to the gospel, enjoins us to believe in Christ as our Saviour; yet there is a great difference between the soul's compliance with this command, and that performance of previous conditions, which our opponents insist upon. These conditions, according to them, must be performed by sinners *before* or *in order to* their having any ground to consider Christ as their own Saviour; and consequently whilst they have no ground to consider him as their righteousness for acceptance or as their strength for performance. But this is by no means the case even in the very first act of that faith which our doctrine inculcates as the immediate duty of every sinner upon hearing the gospel; for in that act Christ is considered as now given to us to be our righteousness and strength. In a word, the difference between the new law requiring certain good qualifications or conditions to give us a right to claim Christ as our own Saviour, and the call which God gives us to receive him as such without money and without price,—is, that the former bids us discharge a duty without

Christ; whereas the latter directs us to discharge it in and by him as our only strength.

In the second place, we observe, that Mr. Bellamy's opinion of saving faith, as it stands opposed to the doctrine of Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey, represents faith rather as a *giving*, than as a *receiving* grace. Faith, according to Mr. Bellamy, far from taking Christ to itself upon the footing of a free grant, makes no claim to him but what is founded upon its reconciliation of heart to the law of God; upon its love to God on account of his infinite amiableness; upon its disposition to return home to God. But it is the distinguishing character of true faith in Jesus Christ, that it is a receiving, self-emptying grace. It is nothing in or of itself: its all is in and from its glorious object. The language of it is; *O our God, we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. In the* LORD JESUS CHRIST, not in myself, *have I righteousness and strength.* By faith a person, considering himself no otherwise than as a child of fallen Adam, ignorant, guilty, unholy and subject to innumerable miseries, receives Christ Jesus as made of God to him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. When the person takes Christ and all these blessings to himself by true faith, the ground he proceeds upon in doing so, is not his consciousness of any good wrought in him or done by him, but only the grant, the free and unconditional grant, which a gracious God in Christ makes, of all in the word of the gospel. In this way, the believer begins to be a partaker of Christ and of spiritual blessings in him. All the graces of the Spirit are among these blessings. Hence it is more proper to say, that the other graces

suppose faith, than to say, that faith supposes them. Faith goes to God in Christ for love, pleading such a promise, as that in Deuteron. xxx. 6. *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart to love the Lord thy God.* —For repentance, pleading such a promise as that in Zechar. xii. 10. *They shall mourn for him*:—for new obedience, pleading such a promise as that in Zechar. x. 12. *I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.* Thus, faith may be considered as *receiver general* for all the other graces. By this property faith is distinguished from all the other graces of the Spirit. For, while they bring some offering to God; love, for example, brings gracious desires; repentance, a broken and contrite heart; zeal, a holy courage to wrestle against all our spiritual enemies; faith comes empty-handed to receive out of the fulness of Christ what is necessary for the preservation, exercise and increase of itself and of all the other graces.

In the third place, Mr. Bellamy's doctrine in opposition to that of Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey in relation to the ground of saving faith, is favourable to the legal bias of man's heart. For though a person be brought to some acknowledgment of the insufficiency of his own righteousness and of the necessity of the righteousness of Christ for the purpose of justification before God; yet, under the influence of this corrupt principle, that the person's inherent righteousness or good qualifications are his only warrant for any application of Christ's righteousness to his own case, the legal pride of the heart will continue in its full strength: because his own righteousness is hereby still allowed to be the ground of his hope of acceptance with God through the righteousness of Christ; and he is still

departing from the gospel plan of justification by free grace through faith; a plan, which will not allow us to consider our personal holiness otherwise than as an effect of justification.

Mr. Bellamy's opinion about saving faith has led him to give the following representation of legalism. "The chief difficulty," says he, "in the way of true "faith, is for the sinner, distressed with the fears of "eternal damnation, to yield the point, not only that "the law does in fact require sinless perfection on pain "of eternal damnation, and that he is under the curse "of the law; but that this law is holy, just and good; "and so he is justly condemned; and, in fact, in the "hands and at the disposal of a sovereign God. This "—this—a proud self-righteous spirit is diametrically "opposite unto*." He has a great deal to the same purpose in the ninth section of his essay. And it is undoubtedly true, that whilst persons are under the reigning power of a legal or self-righteous spirit, they will by no means be reconciled to the purity and spirituality of the precepts or to the inflexible justice of the threatenings of the law, especially as applied to their own case; and that they will set themselves to excuse and extenuate their sins. Legalism, we allow, is attended, with the evil which Mr. Bellamy here describes, but is not formally constituted by it. Legalism is men's natural disposition to depend on their inherent righteousness or personal conformity to the law, as the ground of their justification before God; or to seek life in the way of the covenant of works. This disposition was not culpable in man, whilst he continued upright; because it was then the revealed will of God, that man

* Dialogue 2d. page 77.

should live by doing or his personal obedience. But, in fallen men, this disposition argues ignorance both of God and of themselves; and, in those who enjoy the gospel-dispensation, it implies unbelief and contempt of Christ and his righteousness. In scripture, legalism is represented as men's *desire to be under the law** ; as the bent of their heart *to establish their own righteousness*† ; as their *seeking righteousness by the works of the law*, in opposition to their seeking it by faith‡.

How great is the malignity of this corruption! It is the principal cause of men's enmity against the gospel plan of salvation. For so ignorant are they of God's holy nature and perfect law; so insensible of their guilt and spiritual impotence; and so elated with an opinion of the moral goodness which, they think, they either have attained or are capable of attaining, that nothing is more offensive to them, than the doctrine which directs them to come to Christ as miserable sinners. Nor can a greater affront be offered to them than to tell them, that, with regard to the right of access to Christ, or the ground of dependance on him for salvation, they must account all their duties and good qualifications but loss and dung, and allow themselves to be on a level with the greatest criminals. Legalism attempts to frustrate the Lord's design both in the giving of the law and in the preaching of the gospel. The law was given to humble the sinner and to destroy the conceit of his own righteousness. But legalism abuses the law to the fostering of that proud conceit. The gospel is preached, that the free grace of God in Christ may reign in our justification and in every other part of our salvation, to the utter exclu-

* Gal. iv. 21. † Rom. x. 3. ‡ Rom. ix. 32.

sion of creature-boasting. But legalism makes the death of Christ a footstool for the advancement of self-righteousness. Christ died, says legalism, that our virtuous endeavours and devout exercises may be accepted with God, either as constituting our justifying righteousness or as entitling us to it.

What renders this evil so peculiarly fatal is the subtilty of it, and the plausible appearances which it assumes. It is indeed a dictate of man's reason and conscience, that God will deal with him according to his works. But the delusion lies in supposing that this principle is sufficient to direct us, in our present sinful and miserable condition, to the attainment of the Divine favour. Men are led by the legal bias of their hearts to think, that there is no sufficient motive to a holy practice, without the consideration of it as the ground or condition of their justification before God: and they are often confirmed in this notion by the fair appearances of regular deportment and sometimes of devout exercises, that seem to be attained under the influence of legal principles: though no such attainments can exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. v. 20.

But the subtlety of this evil appears, especially in the dominion that it retains over many who, under an evangelical profession of an entire dependance on the righteousness of Christ, are living upon their duties, their convictions, their frames and feelings, as the ground of their hope, of their peace and comfort. Indeed, those who have never had any humbling sense of this legal disposition to rely on something which they feel or do, instead of relying singly on him whose name is the Lord our righteousness; and who have

not found themselves under the necessity of applying to the throne of grace for deliverance from it; have reason to consider themselves as still under its accursed dominion. All that secure generation who are *settled upon their lees*, having never been *emptied from vessel to vessel*, and who appear at this day to make up the bulk of the visible church, are of this class. In fine, the subtlety and strength of this evil appears in the case of believers themselves, who, though they are no more under its dominion as to their state, yet, in their exercise, often find it stealing upon them, and disposing them to build upon something in themselves, instead of building only upon Christ exhibited in the gospel. Hence they are apt to doat on lively frames and sensible manifestations, while they are continued, and to be unduly cast down, when they are withheld.

LETTER VI.

Remarks upon a passage in a late publication. The doctrine of Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey concerning the nature of true Faith the same with that of our Old Reformers.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IT may be useful to observe how ill the ablest opposers of the doctrine of an appropriating faith have succeeded in their attempts to give such a definition of saving faith as would exclude the notion of appropriation. Some have called it a consent of the heart

to be saved by Christ and to submit to his government. But this definition, understood as excluding appropriation, was found to be totally unauthorized by the scriptural acceptation of the word; and to confound faith with love and other graces. We have been told, that Mr. Baxter had given some such definition of faith; but that, in one of his later publications, he says, "I "formerly believed the formal nature of faith to lie in "consent: but now I recant it: I believe it lies in "trust." Some have defined faith to be no more than an assent to some speculative propositions; such as, that Christ is the Son of God; that he suffered for the sins of the elect; that he makes intercession for them. But such a faith may be found in devils and in many reprobates, and is manifestly inadequate to many of the phrases, by which saving faith is expressed in scripture; such as, receiving Christ himself, trusting in him, coming to him. When some of these writers have admitted the notion of *trust* into their definition of faith, they could not oppose the appropriation taught by Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston and others, without inconsistency. The following passages of a late publication* may serve to exemplify this remark.

"The belief of the truth revealed in the scriptures," says the author of that publication, "is saving faith: "for saving faith is represented as a real belief of the "word of the gospel, a persuasion that Jesus is the "the Christ, the Son of God, or that God hath raised "him from the dead, on the ground of what is written

* *The Gospel worthy of all acceptation* by Mr. Fuller. It is with no small regret, that the writer of these letters finds himself under the necessity of opposing an author who has done excellent service to the cause of truth by *his letters on the Moral tendency of the Calvinistick and Socinian Systems.*

" of him in the scriptures, Mark xvi. 16. John xx. 31. " Luke viii. 12. Matth. xvi. 17. Rom. x. 9."

Answer. It is granted, that saving faith is a belief of the truth revealed in the scriptures concerning Christ Jesus; but it does not follow, that it is *not* a belief of the promise of salvation through him as directed to us; because this promise is a great and essential part of that truth; Acts ii. 39. Rom. iv. 14. Gal. iii. 18, 21. Heb. iv. 1, 2. When a belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that he rose from the dead, is spoken of as saving faith, it must be understood, not as excluding, but rather as including the belief of the gospel-promise*. Thus, " *the name* " *of Christ*," as Calvin observes on John xx. 31. and on 1 John v. 1. " comprehends all the offices which " the prophets ascribe to him; and to believe that Jesus " is the Christ is to hope for all the good things which " are promised as resulting from those offices. Jesus " cannot be received as the Christ without looking for " salvation from him; since for this end he was sent " by the Father and is now offered to us." " And," says another of our reformers in Marloute's collection, " Christ is proposed as the object of faith; for in him " it finds righteousness, life and every desirable bles- " sing, even the whole Godhead." Farther, says the same writer on Rom. x. 9. " when we believe, that Christ

* The terms, which the Scripture uses in speaking of saving faith, are sometimes such as signify knowledge, Isai. liii. 11. or assent, John, vii. 24. Sometimes such as signify confidence, Heb. iii. 6. According to the Hebrew idiom, words signifying knowledge are often to be taken as comprehending in their signification the affections of the heart; and therefore when faith is termed knowledge or assent, we are to consider confidence as included; as, on the other hand, when it is termed confidence, we are to understand knowledge and assent as included. Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ, Disput. xxxi. Sect. 17.

" was raised from the dead, we believe that he made
" satisfaction for our sins; and that he reigns in heaven
" in order that he may form us to his own image."

" In Heb. xi. 6." says the author of the above mentioned publication, " there are three different exercises
" of the mind: first believing, that God is; secondly,
" believing, that he is a rewarder of them that diligently
" seek him; thirdly, coming to him; and the last is
" represented as an effect of the former two. The
" same may be applied to Christ. He that cometh to
" Christ must believe the gospel-testimony, that he is
" the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners: he must
" also believe the gospel-promise, that he will bestow
" eternal salvation on all them that obey him; and un-
" der the influence of this persuasion, he comes to him,
" commits himself to him, or trusts the salvation of
" his soul in his hands."

Answer. As to the truths mentioned in the first and second steps of this process, we allow that the belief of them is necessarily implied or included in every act of saving faith; but for any to hold, that the belief of them constitutes that faith, while they are considered merely as speculative truths and as having no more relation to the person believing than what they have to any other intelligent being, would be a pernicious error. For such a belief is neither answerable to the gospel, as including a free grant of the good which it reveals, nor to the scripture representations of saving faith, as a receiving of Christ, as a confiding in him for all our salvation. As to the last particular of the process, this writer seems to consider it rather as " the immediate
" effect of faith, than as faith itself." So that according to him, there is nothing in the faith itself of true

Christians, abstracting from its immediate effect, that is sufficient to distinguish it from the faith of wicked men or devils. It cannot be allowed, that this notion of saving faith receives any countenance from the text in Heb. xi. 6. The apostle there declares, that it was by means of faith, that Enoch attained such a singular testimony of the Divine acceptance of his person and service: adding that he must have obtained it by means of faith and not otherwise; because there never was nor could be any coming unto God or acceptable worship given to him, without a belief of his being and goodness answerable to the revelation that he makes of himself. The faith of this truth, *that God is*, as it is matter of a special revelation made by God himself, is to be carefully distinguished from the knowledge of the same truth by the light of nature. The latter is a remainder of the impression of God, which man received in his creation: the former is a supernatural belief or apprehension of God as a reconciled God in Christ; and it is in consequence of this belief, that any of fallen mankind, either diligently seek him, or have any well-grounded expectation of a reward of grace from him. In like manner our belief answerable to the gospel-revelation of Christ, is our belief in him as our own Saviour, our Prophet, Priest and King.

This writer seems, however, to waver in his opinion: "Let it be granted," says he, "that a real belief "of the gospel is not merely a matter presupposed in "saving faith, but that it enters into the essence of it, "and he will be far from contending for the exclusion "of trust or dependance." Does this writer mean by these words that he is far from excluding trust or dependance from the essence of saving faith? If he does

so, he retracts what he had said before. To say, that trust belongs to the essence of saving faith is a very different thing from saying, that trust belongs to it, as an immediate effect belongs to its cause. He needs not ask those, who hold the same doctrine on this head with Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey, to grant, that a real belief of the gospel enters into the essence of saving faith; since they admit nothing into their definition of saving faith, but what is necessarily included in the belief of the gospel; for as, according to them, a free promise directed to sinners of mankind, is essential to the gospel? so it is absolutely impossible for that promise to be really believed by the persons to whom it is directed, without trust or dependance.

This writer enquires, "what it is for which a sinner is warranted to trust in Christ?" His answer is, "For the obtaining of mercy in case he applies for it." And how is he to apply for it? To answer *by trusting in Christ*, would be to commit a ridiculous circle; as if our trust in Christ for the obtaining of mercy were the ground of our trust in him: and to answer, *by our desire of him or by any other good act or feeling*, would still make that desire, that act of feeling, and not the gospel revelation of the mercy of God in Christ, the immediate ground of our trust. This evil of making faith build upon itself or upon some other supposed good acts or feelings in ourselves, as the supposed condition of salvation by Jesus Christ, poisons all the definitions and descriptions of saving faith, from which a direct and immediate application of Christ, and of the mercy of God in him upon the ground of the gospel-promise, is excluded.

In vain will any attempt to retort this absurdity upon the scriptural account of saving faith given by

our first reformers, and, after them, by Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston and others. Because the faith of a free unconditional promise, suitable to the perishing condition of the sinner, finds even previous to all reflexion upon its own act, an immediate and complete rest in the promise itself and in the glorious object therein exhibited.

"Let it be considered," says this writer, "what it "was for which a sinner was warranted or obliged to "trust? Was it that Christ would save him, whether "he believed in him or not?" To this we answer, that, though Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston and others caution us against building upon our act of believing, as the proper condition of our salvation; yet nothing was farther from the design of their discourses and writings, than to lead men to think "that Christ would "save them, whether they believed in him or not." They constantly taught, that it is one of the first parts of that salvation, that we partake of by Christ, to be delivered from unbelief and to be enabled to believe in him; that we are to trust in him for this faith, as well as for the other graces of the Spirit; and that it is by means of this faith, and not otherwise, that we are to attain the possession and enjoyment of all the other parts of our salvation.

We need not be surprized, if we meet with severe censures on account of our adherence to the doctrine of an appropriating faith. This is no new or strange thing. The sarcasm of Julian, the Roman emperor, is well known. "*The jargon of believing*," said that apostate, "is all the science to be learned in the Christian "school." The papists used to call our first reformers *Solifidians*, and the appropriating faith taught by

them, *figmentum Lutheri*, Luther's fiction; and *amentissima insania*, the height of madness*.

The doctrine concerning the nature of faith maintained in the preceding letters, has been called *Marrow-doctrine;* a term sometimes used by way of reproach, as if this doctrine had been first broached about the middle of the seventeenth century by the author of a book, entitled, The Marrow of Modern Divinity. But this imputation of novelty is sufficiently confuted by that book itself, it being nothing else but an honest representation of the evangelical doctrine of our reformers, such as, Luther, Calvin, Musculus, Beza, Tindal, Fox and others; a judicious collection of testimonies being also added in Mr. Boston's notes†. To the same purpose it may not be improper to add here a quotation from Altingius's explication of the Heidelberg Catechism; a book which was written a considerable time before the Marrow of Modern Divinity; and which expresses the doctrine taught by our reformers in general on this head.

* See Arrowsmith's Tactica Sacra, lib. ii. cap. 7.

† Luther, in his commentary on the epistle to the Galatians, often expresses the deep sense he had of the necessity and importance of this doctrine. On chap. i. 4. he says: "Except "thou be found in the number of those that say, *Our sins;* who "have this doctrine; and teach, hear, learn, love and believe "the same, there is no salvation for thee." On chap. ii. 20. "Read," says he, "with great vehemence these words, *me* "and *for me;* and so inwardly practise with thyself, that, with "a sure faith, thou mayst conceive and print this word *me* in "thy heart, and apply it unto thyself." This appropriation is strongly expressed in Calvin's definition of faith: "It is," says he, "a firm and certain knowledge of the Divine good "will towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the "free promise in Christ, is both revealed in our mind and seal"ed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Institut. lib. ii. chap. 2d. sect. 7.

"True faith," says that valuable writer, "is distinguished by a sure trust or fiducial apprehension "of Christ and all his benefits as exhibited in the "promise of the gospel. That there is such a trust "or confidence in true faith is proved."

"1. From all those places of scripture, in which "faith or believing is put for confiding or trusting, "John xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* "And ix. 36. *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on "him?* Acts xxvii. 25. *Be of good cheer; for I believe "God, that it shall be even as it was told me.* Rom. x. "10. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* "In all these places to believe signifies to confide or "trust. In other places where the word *faith* is used, "it plainly means *confidence* or *trust.* Matth. ix. 22. "*Thy faith hath saved thee;* meaning the faith of the "woman who had the bloody issue; the faith by which "she said within herself, *If I shall only touch his gar-"ment, I shall be healed.* Matth. xv. 28. *O woman, "great is thy faith.* Acts xiv. 9. *Paul perceived, that "the impotent man had faith to be healed.* Rom. i. 17. "*He that is just by his faith, shall live.*"

"2. From the appellations which are given to "true faith, declarative of its nature: such as, *a full "persuasion,* Rom. iv. 21. *boldness or freedom of speech,* "Heb. iv. 16. *being of good comfort;* Matth. ix. 2. "*rejoicing or glorying,* Rom. v. 2. Heb. iii. 6."

"3. From the most remarkable descriptions of it "which occur in scripture, Heb. xi. 1. *Faith is the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of "things not seen.* The Greek word here translated "substance, is rendered confidence in the same epistle, "chap. iii. 6, 14. and in 2 Corinth. ix. 4. xi. 17. Faith

" is said in Rom. iv. 20, 21. to be that by which a per-
" son does not doubt of God's promise through unbe-
" lief, but gives glory to God by a firm persuasion,
" that he who hath promised is able also to perform."

" 4. From those things which are in scripture
" opposed to true faith, as its contraries: such as,
" distrust, doubting, fear. Matth. xiv. 31. *Jesus said*
" *unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou*
" *doubt?* Luke viii. 5. *Fear not, only believe.*"

" 5. The formal nature of true and saving faith
" lies in that by which it is distinguished from all other
" sorts of faith: But by a sure trust in or fiducial ap-
" prehension of Christ true and saving faith is so dis-
" tinguished; particularly, from historical faith which
" produces fear and despair, James ii. 19.—from tem-
" porary faith, which has no root, does not receive and
" retain the word of the gospel in an honest and good
" heart, Luke viii. 13, 15.—from the faith of miracles
" which does not make any partakers of Christ, Matth.
" vii. 22, 23."

" For these reasons we conclude, that the formal
" nature of faith lies in a sure trust in or fiducial ap-
" prehension of Christ, as exhibited to us in the gos-
" pel-promise."

It may be of use to add here from the same author the substance of his answers to two questions.

The first question is, Whether there are not true believers who have little confidence, and who labour under many doubts and fears?

Answer. " When we describe faith as a firm assent
" and a sure trust, we describe what it ought to be accord-

" ing to the rule of God's word; that we may be brought " to a humbling sense of the weakness and defects of our " faith as our sin, and to aspire after an increase of this " grace. God grants a certain measure of faith to every " believer, Rom. xii. 3. and the Spirit distributes his gifts " to every one severally as he will, 1 Corinth. xii. 11. " Hence the great faith of some is commended, Mat. " viii. 10. xv. 18. The little faith of others is reprov- " ed, Mat. viii. 28. xiv. 31. There are none in the mi- " litant church whose faith is free from defect or infir- " mity, Rom. xi. 20. 1 Corinth. xiii. 12. *Now we see* " *through a glass darkly:—we know but in part.* Mean- " while, a weak or little faith may be true faith; just " as a weak and sickly man is truly a man. Such a " faith is justifying; for faith justifies, not because it is " strong; but because it apprehends Christ as the Lord " our righteousness, in the word of promise. The strug- " gle, which is experienced, in essaying to maintain " this fiducial apprehension of Christ, is a sign, that, " though there is much remaining unbelief, it does not " reign; and that there is in the soul a lively and effi- " cacious principle of faith captivating the understand- " ing and the will to a subjection to the authority of " God in his word. This doctrine is confirmed by " many sweet promises, Isai. xlii. 3. Mat. v. 6. John " vi. 35, 37. and by many comfortable declarations, " Philip. iii. 12. Gal. iv. 9. and also by this rational con- " sideration; that the variations of any thing, in res- " pect of degrees, do not alter its nature: so the nature " of faith is the same amidst its various degrees of " strength or weakness, of increase or decrease."

The second question is, How could the apostle distinguish trust or confidence from faith, Ephes. iii. 12. if the formal nature of faith lies in trust.

Answer. "Trust or confidence is not always in scripture taken in the same sense. First, it is sometimes put for the object of confidence or the thing trusted in, Job xviii. 14. *His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle:* that is, his children or wealth. Secondly, it is put for fiducial assent or persuasion, as in 2 Corinth. i. 15. *In this confidence*, that is, being persuaded. Heb. xiii. 18. *We trust we have a good conscience*, that is, we are persuaded. Thirdly, sometimes it is put for the comfortable sense of security or freedom from danger, which is the effect of persuasion. Job xi. 18. *Thou shalt be secure.* The original word signifies, *Thou shalt trust*, or, as the Geneva translation has it, *Thou shalt be full of confidence.* Confidence belongs to the essence of faith in the second sense, or, as signifying a persuasion, that God makes us a grant of Christ and of eternal life in him. In the third sense, the word confidence seems to be used in Ephes. iii. 12. as signifying that composed rest and establishment of mind, which is the immediate effect of faith, according to its measure; and which is manifested by what is there called *boldness*, or *liberty of speech*, in drawing near to God. But if it be considered, that this security is the effect, not only of our reflection upon the direct act of faith, but of that act itself; (*we have boldness and confidence*, it is not said by the knowledge or consciousness of our faith, but *by our faith* itself;) we will find here a convincing proof, that faith discerns Christ, not only as a Mediator in general, but as a Mediator for us in particular, procuring for us peace with God and introduction into his gracious presence; for no other faith can produce this boldness and confidence."

LETTER VII.

On the Gospel-revelation of God as reconciled in Christ.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

ARMINIUS and his followers, whose peculiar tenets were justly condemned in the celebrated synod which met at Dort in the year 1618, represented this as the whole immediate effect of the death of Christ, that, justice being satisfied, God might, consistently with his honour, grant pardon and reconciliation on such terms, as he should see fit; and that it might be possible for God, either to detain the captives or to set them at liberty. By the death of Christ, said they, God is reconcileable to all men, but reconciled to none*.

* Morte Christi, ait Arminius, factum est, ut Deus jam possit, justitia non obstante, hominibus peccatoribus peccata remittere, et Spiritum gratiæ largiri. Interea jus suum integrum manet, illa bona, illis quibus visum, et istis conditionibus quas præscribere volet, impartiri.

It is pity to see some, who profess adherence to the evangelical doctrine of the Reformation, warping so much to the Arminian scheme on this head. Some have taught, that God might, in strict justice, withhold grace and glory from those for whom Christ died. How can this opinion consist with what the scripture teaches about Christ's *giving himself a ransom for many*, and *laying down his life for the sheep*, as their *Surety*? Matth. xi. 28 John x. 11, 15. Heb. vii. 22. When an adequate satisfaction is once given by the Surety, the persons, on whose behalf it is given, are, in strict justice acquitted: grace and glory are theirs, in strict justice, as merited by that satisfaction: because he and they are one, in the eye of the law.

Would it be a sufficient declaration of the truth in this matter, to say, that the satisfaction or righteousness of Jesus Christ opens the way for the exercise of mercy in such methods as the wisdom of God sees fit to adopt?

By no means. Were the righteousness of Christ no more than a satisfaction to the penalty of the broken law, there might

In a similar manner, Mr. Bellamy speaks of God's willingness to be reconciled upon their return to him. "The gospel," according to him, "is glad tidings, that, "through Christ, God is *ready to be reconciled* to the "returning penitent†." "God" says he in another

† Dialogue p. 110.

be some pretence for saying, that it only opened the way for exercise of mercy by the removal of the curse. But his righteousness is also a compleat fulfilment of the precept, considered as the condition of eternal life, in the stead of his people. In this view, it is called, his obedience; and gives them legal security for all the blessings of that life, Rom. v. 19.

This is more evident by considering, that, in point of merit, the obedience of Christ is infinitely superior to that of man before the fall. The merit of the first Adam was only improper merit; as, if he had continued upright, his title to eternal life would have risen, not from the worth of his obedience, but from the promise of the covenant of works. Whereas the merit of the second Adam's obedience is most proper, its intrinsick value being such as entitles to eternal life, according to strict justice. Hence his blood is called precious blood; the blood and righteousness of God; that is, a righteousness wrought out in our nature by him who is the true God, whose name alone is Jehovah, 1 Pet. i. 19. Acts xx. 28. Rom. iii. 22. And will any Christian deny that grace and glory are due, *in strict justice*, to this astonishing righteousness?

It seems improper to speak of the righteousness of Christ as opening the way for some other methods *which God may adopt* of exercising his mercy; a mode of expression borrowed from the Arminians, implying that we have ground to expect that God will adopt some other methods of exercising mercy as additional to that of exercising it through the blood of Christ; or rather that this is only an introduction to those other methods. Mercy is exercised through the blood of Christ in the pardon of sin, Ephes. i. 7. in the adopting of poor sinners into the family of God, Gal. iv. 5. in their sanctification, 1 Pet. ii. 24. in bringing them at last to the full enjoyment of eternal life, Rom. v. 21. The Bible knows no other method, nor gives us ground to expect that any other will ever be adopted. The Arminian method for which, they say, the blood of Christ opened the way, is a new law or covenant of works, directly opposite to God's method of exercising mercy, Rom. iii. 27, 28. iv. 5. xi. 6.

But it is said, that the salvation of sinners is not a commercial transaction; that sin is not a debt, but a crime.

place, "to testify his approbation and infinite delight in "the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, becomes, rea- "dy to be reconciled to any how vile soever, who repent "and return‡." On the contrary, the Divines whom

‡ Essay on the nature, &c.

Sin is called in scripture *a debt* and sinners *debtors*; designations, which may be of much use in directing us to right apprehensions of Christ's suretyship and satisfaction. To say that Christ paid our debt, when *he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows*, is sound speech, that cannot be condemned. Nor is it any way inconsistent with our doctrine on this head, that some things may be said of *a private debt*, that would not correspond with what we believe concerning the punishment of sin. A creditor may dispense with the payment of such a debt. But the holiness and justice of God, and the honour of his moral government of the world, render the punishment of sin indispensably necessary. For *he cannot deny himself*. But this only tends to the fuller establishment of our doctrine; as it shews, that no other righteousness could be accepted of God, as the ground of our justification, but such as, *in strict justice*, would entitle us to that and all the other blessings of grace and glory. Our salvation, through such a righteousness, is not only in some way consistent with the justice of God, but, as the apostle says, Rom. iii. 25. *declares it*, glorifies and sets it in the most conspicuous and illustrious point of view.

But how is this righteousness of Christ peculiar to the elect, since it is as sufficient for others as for them; and as suitable to the case of other sinners as to theirs?

The sufficiency and the suitableness of this righteousness, together with the free offer or grant of it to sinners of mankind indefinitely, are the grounds upon which the hearers of the gospel are called to believe in it for their salvation. But this setting forth of Christ and his righteousness to these hearers, whilst it is not embraced by faith, is no evidence of their belonging to the number of those for whom Christ died: for they only are of that number, who are *in him* as their federal head; an in-being in him, which is an impenetrable secret; till it be manifested by the Holy Spirit working faith in their hearts, and thereby vitally uniting them to him in their effectual calling.

But it is said, that in this case there will be no room for free remission with respect to the Father.

Here we may observe a difference between pecuniary debts and the debt of punishment. In the former case, the payment of a debt by a surety, or one that gives bail, is agreeable to the letter of the law, as well as the payment of it by the debtor him-

Mr. Bellamy opposes, teach, that God is revealed in the gospel as reconciled in Christ. By this expression it is not meant, that any change takes place in the nature or will of God, but only that the infinite justice,

self; it being all one to the creditor. But as to punishment, the law in its rigor, says, the same person that sinned should suffer. Here then the grace of the Father is manifested, in his not insisting upon the terms of the law, that sinners should suffer the punishment of their own sin; but admitting it to be transferred to the person of Christ, or condescending to consider Christ and the elect as one, and to regard them as suffering and satisfying offended justice in him. Thus the grace of the Father appears in admitting, and also in providing a Surety for poor sinners. But the Surety being once admitted, and his satisfaction being adequate, he having suffered the whole punishment due to the sins of his people, the remission of sin, is, with regard to him, a matter of strict justice; whilst it is to us altogether of free grace. These two are still represented as harmonizing in the forgiveness of our sins through the satisfaction of Christ, 1 John i. 8. Rom. iii. 26. Besides, all the grace manifested by the Son in the remission of sin, is also the grace of the Father; for he and the Father are one.

The covenant of grace having been made from eternity among the persons of the Godhead, and the Son having, according to his undertaking, perfectly fulfilled the condition of that covenant, the accomplishment of all the promises, is due to him, in strict justice, according to that blessed council of peace.

Nothing is added or given to the perfection of the Divine Being by the righteousness of Christ: nor is any change ascribed to God by what is now said concerning the effect of that righteousness; the change is only in the relation of the creature to God.

But if grace and glory be due, in strict justice, to Christ, on account of his law-magnifying righteousness, and to his people in him, how is their faith still necessary?

We answer, faith is an eminent fruit of this righteousness; and the mean of our possessing it to our actual justification, terminating on the conscience: it is also an eminent accomplishment of the promise, and the mean by which we embrace all the promises as yea and amen in Christ. It is the spiritual organ by which Christ and the good of the promise in him are received and enjoyed, while we are in the present imperfect state. Without faith and the fruits of it, we have no evidence of our being among those for whom Christ died and rose again.

which necessarily belongs to him as the judge of all the earth, having been abundantly glorified by the satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ, his good-will towards man has obtained a full and honourable vent; and that all the spiritual blessings, proceeding from his special love to a certain number of mankind-sinners, are infallibly secured to them by that satisfaction, without any other procuring cause.

That Mr. Bellamy's expression just now mentioned is injurious to the truth of the gospel appears from such considerations as the following.

1. The immediate effect of the death of Christ is not a possibility of reconciliation, but reconciliation itself. The reconciliation, effected by the death of Christ, includes both the appeasing of God's wrath against us and the procuring of the removal or slaying of our enmity against God. The former of these two things appears to be meant by this expression of the apostle: *For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, Rom. v. 10. which words are not to be understood of our conversion; for that is intended by the following words, *We shall be saved by his life*; conversion being more immediately the effect of Christ's life than of his death; and being here as plainly distinguished from our reconciliation by his death, as the effect from the cause. Hence in the Syriac, which is the most ancient translation extant of the New Testament, the first clause of this verse is rendered, *God is reconciled to us by the death of his Son*. It is usual in Scripture to say, the offender is reconciled, even when the thing most directly meant is that the offended party is appeased. Thus in Matth. v. 24. our Lord directs a person, who *remembers, that his*

brother, hath ought against him, to go and be reconciled to his brother, that is, to endeavour, by offering satisfaction, to turn away or appease his brother's anger. In the same sense, the wife, that had deserted her husband, is enjoined to be *reconciled to him*, 1 Corinth. vii. 11. When God is said to be a God of peace, and to be in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; nothing less can be meant, than that he is reconciled in Christ.

Objection. God is not reconciled to all men. Those that believe not are condemned already; the wrath of God abideth on them: God is angry with them every day.

Answer. There are two ways wherein God reveals himself to fallen men. One of these ways is that of the covenant of works. Here he reveals himself as condemning every sinner, that is, all mankind considered as in their natural state. Every child of Adam, as such, is a child of wrath. By this covenant, in itself, we cannot know that God is either reconcilable or reconciled. Nothing is revealed here but the wrath of God against *all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. Hence we need not wonder, that the scripture so often declares all, that are under this broken covenant, all unbelievers or persons out of Christ, to be under the wrath and curse of God. The other way, in which God reveals himself to fallen men, is, that of the covenant of grace: wherein he regards men no otherwise than as they are in his beloved Son, in whom he is ever well pleased or intirely reconciled.

If it be said, that in the calls of the gospel, God proclaims that he is willing to be reconciled to those

that, persisting in their unbelief, are still under the covenant of works.

We answer, that the word of God represent him as irreconcileable to men, according to the tenor of the broken covenant of works; but as entirely reconciled to them, when they are found betaking themselves to the covenant of grace. The willingness of God revealed in the calls given to unbelievers, is not a willingness to be appeased or reconciled, as if something remained to be done by way of expiation or satisfaction for sin; but a willingness, that they should renounce the covenant of works, and betake themselves to the covenant of grace; a willingness, that they should know and acknowledge God according to the gospel revelation of him, as a reconciled God in Christ*.

2. The view that saving faith obtains of God in the glass of the gospel, is a view of him, not as reconcileable, but as actually reconciled. Faith apprehends God as in Christ reconciling us to himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us. The language of faith is not, that God is, on his part, willing to be reconciled; and that I must do something, on mine to reconcile him; but that he is already manifesting himself as a God of peace through Jesus Christ, who made peace by the blood of his cross. As soon as we have the least grain of true faith, the face of God begins to appear mild, serene and propitious to us. As we make

* The substance of what is here advanced is expressed by Dr. Owen in the following words of his Theologoumena: Omnis Dei revelatio ad fœdus aliquod pertinet. Duo autem sunt fœdera Deum inter et homines; operum unum, gratiæ alterum. Ex prioris fœderis tenore Deus placabiles non est. Revelatio ad posterius pertinens, non Deum placabilem, sed placatum, reconciliatum et mundum sibi reconciliantem, prædicare debet.

progress in the exercise of faith, our views of his amiable countenance become more clear and distinct. Though believers during the present state, labour under much ignorance of God in Christ; yet so certain and so efficacious is the sight, which in believing, they obtain, of the glory of the Lord, that they are, more and more, changed into the same image†.

3. This view of the gospel of Christ, as if it represent God as only reconcileable, not reconciled, flatters men's legal pride, and derogates from the perfection of the satisfaction of Christ. Is God, as yet, only reconcileable to us? Is he not reconciled by the death of his Son? By what other means is he to be at last, reconciled? Why, says Mr. Bellamy, by our repenting and returning home to him. Thus, it would seem, that, by Christ's obedience unto death, God is only ready to be reconciled: but by our own good excercises the work is accomplished: God is actually reconciled. A very subordinate part is thus ascribed to what Christ hath done and suffered; while the glory of turning away the wrath of God from us is ascribed to our inherent righteousness.

4. If the gospel represented God as only reconcileable, not reconciled, it would afford us no ground at all for the hope of salvation. The doctrine, which makes any works of righteousness done by us the federal or proper condition of our reconciliation to God, is destitute of any foundation in the word of God. But supposing that God should offer to be reconciled to us upon condition of our thinking one thought truly and spiritually good; our case would still be hopeless. For

† 2 Corinth. iii. 18. Calvin's Institutions, chap. ii. sect. 19.

as we have no natural ability to think such a thought, so we have no ground to expect that an unreconciled God will give us the least crumb of saving grace, by which we might be enabled to think it. In fine, this truth, that God is reconciled in Christ, is at the bottom of every communication of his grace to us, and of every good motion of our souls towards him.

LETTER VIII.

Of Marks or Evidences of a state of Grace.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

MR. MARSHAL and the other divines, whom Mr Bellamy opposes, are very careful to distinguish between the assurance of salvation which is in the direct act of faith, and assurance, that we are already in a gracious state. "Observe diligently" says Mr Marshal, "that the assurance directed unto is not an assurance "that we have already received Christ and his salva- "tion, or that we have been already brought into a "state of grace; but only that God is pleased graci- "ously to give Christ and his salvation unto us, and to "bring us into a state of grace; though we have been "altogether in a state of sin and death, until the present "time. So that this doctrine doth not at all tend to "breed presumption in wicked and unregenerate men, "that their state is good already; but only encourag- "eth to come to Christ confidently for a good state." "Mark well," says the same author in another place, "the difference between these two questions: Whe-

"ther God will graciously accept and save me, though
"a vile sinner, through Christ? and whether I am al-
"ready brought into a state of salvation? The former
"of these questions is to be resolved affirmatively by a
"confident faith in Christ, but the latter is to be en-
"quired into by self-examination."

"It seems very plain, that it is one thing to believe or trust in Christ, for our own salvation; and another thing to know that we have believed, and that our faith is of a saving nature. The ground of the former is only the word of the gospel; but the ground of the latter is our having the marks and evidences of a gracious state laid down in scripture. Such marks and evidences will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even when they shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. "Though the weight," says Mr. Boston, "of our acceptance with God lies not in
"our good works; yet the weight of our evidence
"does. If you set not yourselves to do all the parts
"of Christ's will without reserve, ye do nothing. Sound
"believers fail in the degrees, but not in the parts of obe-
"dience." Such is the doctrine uniformly taught in the writings and ministrations of Mr. Bellamy's opponents. Hence it must astonish a candid reader to find Mr. Bellamy insinuating*, that his opponents "do not real-
"ly and verily believe, that none will at last be admit-
"ted into heaven, but such as have the characters es-
"sential to christians, that is, such as are humble, meek,
"penitent, breathing after holiness, merciful, pure in
"heart, peace-makers, willing to part with all for
"Christ, and to go through the greatest sufferings in
"his cause." Did ever his opponents say or insinuate,

* Dial. iii. p. 67.

that persons, destitute of these qualities, would at last, be admitted into heaven? Far from it. Let us observe, for instance, how one of them, the judicious Mr. Boston, speaks to his hearers. "Sirs, according to the "state of your souls now, so will it be with you through "eternity. Examine yourselves, therefore, now, whe-"ther ye be yet in the black state of nature, uncircum-"cised spiritually; or whether ye be in the state of "grace and of the true circumcision. Ye have heard "the characters, let conscience make the application; "and judge yourselves, that ye may not be judged and "condemned with the world." How strange is it, that Mr. Bellamy could represent ministers who preach and write in this strain, as having given up the way of look-ing for marks and evidences of grace?*

What he chiefly grounds this charge upon is their teaching that there is an assurance of salvation in the direct act of faith; as, in that act, a person, without re-flection upon any previous acts or exercises, rests im-mediately upon the grant or promise of the gospel, for his own everlasting salvation. This, according to the distinction just now taken notice of, is quite a different thing from the person's knowledge, of his being alrea-dy in the faith or in a state of grace. When Mr. Bel-lamy argues, that assurance of faith, as explained by the authors in question, makes men careless about the assurance of sense; it is just as unreasonable, as it would be for one to say, An honest man has given me a promise of a little money, of which I stand in the most absolute need: and therefore it is no matter of concern to me, whether I actually get it to answer my need, or not. Would not common sense, on the con-

* Page 91.

may, lead one to say, I have a promise of money from such an honest man; and therefore I will not fail to seek, that I may have the use of it? This concern will be the greater, on the supposition, that the promise, like the gospel of Christ, secures to the accepter a variety of benefits to be obtained one after another, in such manner and order, that each previous benefit is a sure sign or pledge of more glorious benefits to follow. The apostle plainly intimates, that the appropriating belief of the promise of entering into God's rest, instead of leading us to carelessness and security, excites fear and solicitude with regard to our actual attainment of that rest, Heb. iv. 1.—not a slavish fear that makes a person let go the promise, as being doubtful either of the truth of it, or of his warrant to rely on it; but such a fear as makes him both embrace the promise with redoubled ardour, and look with earnest expectation for the begun accomplishment of it.

Here it may be proper to quote some passages in the writings of Mr. Hervey and Mr. Marshal, and to consider the censures passed upon them by Mr. Bellamy.

The first passage we adduce is from the sixteenth Dialogue of Theron and Aspassio. "Our good qualifications," says Aspasio, "are sometimes like the "stars at noon day, not easily, if at all, discernible; or, "they are like a glow worm in the night, glimmering "rather than shining. Instead therefore of poring on "our own hearts, to discover by inherent qualities our "interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord."

In this passage we may observe two things: first, a case supposed; and secondly, a particular course recommended as the most proper in that case.

With regard to the case supposed, wherein a believer cannot discern his good qualifications to be sufficient evidences of a state of grace, Mr. Bellamy says, that, "since it is the character of the saints to bring "forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some "thirty, it seems difficult to reconcile it with scripture, "that a true saint (there being no extraordinary dis-"ease, as the hypochondria, &c. nor other extraordi-"nary circumstances that may account for it,) should "live in the dark, full of doubts and fears about his "state from year to year; I say more difficult to re-"concile this with scripture, than it is to prove, that "they may live so as to make their calling and elec-"tion sure."

In answer to what Mr. Bellamy here insinuates, it may be observed, that, though this exhortation of the apostle Peter implies, that the assurance of sense is attainable, yet it also implies, that there are believers who have not yet attained it, and that it is their duty to be engaged in the sincere pursuit of it. It is true, that all the saints bring forth fruit; but it is also true, that the evidences arising from that fruit, from grace received, from good dispositions or exercises, may, for a time, (how long seems not precisely determined in scripture) be found much out of sight. Where were Heman's evidences, when he complained, that he was *a man of no strength*, no spiritual life or grace; *free among the dead*, Psal. lxxxviii. 4, 5? Where were Jeremiah's evidences, when he cursed the day of his birth? or Peter's, when he said to Christ, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord?* or the Church's, when she said, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me: Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our part?* We know, that

those who have true grace or holiness are liable to spiritual decays; owing to no other hypochondria or extraordinary circumstance, than some remarkable prevalence of indwelling sin, or negligence as to the discharge of some seasonable duty. Even the wise virgins may slumber and sleep. "We know," says Beza, "that it is a most false conclusion of satan, "that we have no true faith, because the effects of it "do not appear for a time. A person might as well "say, that wherever there is no flame, there is no fire; "or that, because the trees, in winter, have neither "leaves nor fruit, they have therefore no vegetable "life*." Those who fear the Lord, and who obey the voice of his servant, may, for a time, walk in darkness, and have no light of sensible comfort. "God," says Dr. Owen, "who in infinite wisdom, manageth "the new creature or the whole life of grace by his "Spirit, doth so turn the streams, and so renew and "change the special kinds of its operations, as that we "cannot easily trace his paths therein; and therefore "we may often be at a loss about it, as not knowing "well what he is doing with us. For instance, it may "be, the work of grace, and holiness hath greatly put "forth and evidenced itself in the affections which are "renewed by it; causing persons to experience readiness unto, delight and chearfulness in holy duties, "especially those of immediate intercourse with God. "But, after a while, it may seem good to the Sovereign "Disposer of this affair so to order his dispensations "towards them by afflictions, temptations, occasions of "life in the world, that they shall have new work to "do, and all the grace they have shall be turned into

* Confession, chap. iv. art. 20.

"a new exercise. Hereon, it may be, they find not "that sensible vigour in their spiritual affections, nor "that delight in spiritual duties, which they have done "formerly. This makes them sometimes ready to "conclude, that grace is decayed in them, and the "springs of holiness dried up: So that they know "neither where nor what they are. And it may be the "real work of sanctification is still thriving and effectually carried on in them*." And says the same excellent writer on the cxxxth Psalm, "A man may "have grace acting in him; and yet not know, nor be "sensible, that he hath acting grace." Such as duly consider these things will not find Mr. Hervey erroneous for saying, that the good qualifications of believers are sometimes not easily, if at all, discernable. The truth on this head seems to be well expressed in our Larger Catechism, in the answer to question 81: "Assurance of grace and salvation" (that is, assurance of sense) "not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they attain it; and, after "the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and "intermitted, through manifold distempers, temptations and desertions. Yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of "God, as keeps them from sinking into utter despair."

With regard to the course which ought to be taken by persons in the case now supposed, Mr. Hervey expresses his judgment both negatively and positively. He would not have persons in that case pore on their hearts to discover, by inherent qualities, their interest in Christ. His meaning is, that they should not do so without or in order to their essaying the direct act of

* On the Spirit, book iv. chap. 2d.

faith; as if they were to seek some ground for it in their inherent qualifications. That such a poring on their own hearts is meant as would be a hindrance to that act of faith, appears from the beautiful simile, which is used in the same place, taken from the practice of the industrious fisherman, who does not spend his time in idle triumphs on account of his success; who does not stand to measure the dimensions of the fish, or to compute the value of the prize. In short, the poring on our own heart, against which Aspasio cautions us, is just the evil of seeking a ground of confidence or the restoration of our evidences in and from ourselves, in opposition to the course which he positively recommends; namely, that of renewing our application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord; that of seeking afresh to the inexhaustible fulness of our Saviour for renewed communications. This is no other doctrine than what is ordinarily taught by protestant divines. "It were good for you," says a pious writer, "who doubt of your faith, to set your-"selves for actual present believing. Some people, "who are apt to be weary of long debates in their "minds, whether they have believed or not, and tempt-"ed to give it over, are, by the blessing of God upon "this mean, relieved of their fears and cleared of their "doubts. Addressing themselves to the Lord with "all the reverence and seriousness they can attain, and, "in the sense of their sin and need of a Saviour, they "set themselves to receive and embrace Christ as their "Redeemer and Lord†." "I suppose," says another, "that you do not know, that you are regenerate or "born of God; should this hinder or discourage you "from believing forgiveness, from closing with the

† Craighead on the Sacrament.

"promises? Not at all. First, to take up mercy, "pardon and forgiveness absolutely on the account of "Christ; and then to yield all obedience in the strength "and for the love of Christ, is the life of a believer, "Ephes. ii. 8, 9, 10. Obedience, duties, mortification "of sin and the like, are precious stones to build with; "but unmeet to be first laid, to bear upon them the "whole weight of the building. The foundation is to "be laid in mere grace, mercy, pardon in the blood "of Christ. This the soul is to accept of and rest in "merely as it is grace, without the consideration of "any thing in itself, but that it is sinful and obnoxious "to ruin‡." Thus protestant divines used to direct a sinner to lay the foundation of his hope, not in any moral good thing felt in him or done by him, but wholly without himself, in the gospel-testimony and promise of God in Christ. In full consistency with this doctrine, they represented the sense or consciousness, which believers have, of the work of the Holy Spirit in their own souls; and of their having in some measure the characters laid down in the scriptures of the children of God, as a great encouragement to continue in the exercise of faith, and as necessary to distinguish true faith from the presumptuous confidence of hypocrites.

Mr. Bellamy insinuates, that Mr. Hervey "com-"pares what our Saviour calls a rock to the stalk of a "tulip*." Mr. Hervey has indeed the following words: "When we are advised to prove our title to comfort by "genuine marks of conversion; and taught, on this "ground, to fix the capital of assurance; I would "rather propose a question, than advance objections,

‡ Owen on the 130th Psalm. * Mr. Bellamy's Dial. p. 98.

" Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of a ca-
" thedral upon the stalk of a tulip† ?"

A writer's words ought to be understood agreeably to the manifest design of his discourse and according to their connexion with what goes before and follows them. Mr. Hervey is here speaking of the foundation of faith, not of the evidences of it. For, in the very next paragraph of Aspasio's discourse, he allows, that " the love of the brethren may very justly be admitted " as an evidence that our faith is real, and our assur-
" ance no delusion." As to the passage in Matth. vii. 24—28. it may be observed, that, though our Lord represents those, who hear his words and do them, as building upon a rock, it will not follow, that their own doings or inherent good qualities, (which Mr. Hervey compares in one respect to a tulip) are the rock upon which the truly wise build for eternity. Their doing Christ's words is rather an evidence of their building upon the unshaken rock of the Mediator's righteousness and Jehovah's faithfulness pledged in the gospel-promise. " This rock," as Chemnitius observes on the place, " is not our contrition nor our works. For " Paul says, 1 Corinth. iii. 11. *Other foundation can no* " *man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ.* " And what that rock is upon which Christ will have " his church built, so that the gates of hell may not " prevail against it, Peter explains in his first epistle, " ii. 4. Christ is apprehended and dwells in our hearts " by faith. Faith, however, cannot be without repen-
" tance: a good tree brings forth good fruit. Doing " Christ's words may here be understood of every part " of his doctrine; provided every part be kept in its

† Theron and Aspasio, Dial. xvi.

" own place; Christ being still regarded as the only " foundation, and entitled to the whole glory and honour " of our salvation."

Mr. Marshal, having observed, that the saints recorded in scripture had an assurance of their interest in God and his salvation, " which was not founded on " the certainty of their good qualifications;"—Mr. Bellamy puts the following questions: " Was not " Abraham," says he, " certain of his sincerity, when, " out of love and obedience to God, he left his father's " house, &c. Was not Moses certain of his sincerity, " when he despised the treasures of Egypt? Were " not Job, Hezekiah, Peter, so?" All this is granted, and what then? Why, concludes Mr. Bellamy, because they had assurance arising from the evidence of their sincerity; therefore, they had no assurance of faith previous to their attainment of that evidence. This conclusion is no better than it would be to infer, that, because a man, having a farm or plantation, occupied by a tenant, obtains an evidence of his property in it by the tenant's payment of his rent; therefore he has no other assurance of his title; no assurance of it arising from his possession of the deeds of conveyance. A person's attainment of the assurance of sense upon a distinct view of the work of grace begun in him, is nothing against his having had, in some measure, an assurance of faith before. *Hereby*, says the apostle John, *we know, that we know him, if we keep his commandments*. This text is nothing against the admitting of both these kinds of assurance. By the assurance of faith we may first know, that God hath made over to us the saving knowledge of himself in the gospel-promise, Jerem. xxiv. 7. *I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord.* And then in the consequent course of new obedience we may have an assurance of

sense, that we have, in some measure, actually attained that knowledge. These two kinds of assurance, instead of being inconsistent, are mutually subservient to each other; as Mr. Erskine says,

> Faith gives sense both life and breath,
> And sense gives joy and strength to faith.

But it must be acknowledged that the assurance of sense is less constant than the assurance of faith. The latter will often continue, when the former disappears. "If experience," says Dr. Sibs, "should wholly fail, "there is such a Divine power in faith, that a very "little beam of it, having no other help than a naked "promise, will uphold a soul." The ground of the assurance of faith is the unchangeable promise of God in Christ: whereas the ground of the assurance of sense is our gracious but variable experience of the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls. Hence Aspasio had reason to say of the assurance of sense, that "what "measure of it is already attained, may soon be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptations or by the "insurrection of remaining sin. At such a juncture, "how will the assurance of sense keep its standing? "How retain its being! It will fare like a tottering "wall before the tempest; or be as the rush without "mire, and the flag without water." Aspasio here cautions us against the danger of leaning on any sensible assurance we may seem to have attained; when we are grievously assaulted by inward corruptions and outward temptations. In such a case, our own attainments, while we look to them, instead of looking to the righteousness of Christ and the promise of God for defence, will prove but a tottering wall. Every true Christian desires to have the assurance of sense; and where there is no sincere pursuit of it, there is no evidence of saving faith. But it is deplorable, when the

degree of that kind of assurance which a person seems to have attained, is rested in, and occasions remissness in his endeavours to renew the direct acts of faith in the gospel-promise. David shews us, from his own experience, the danger of doating on any assurance of sense we may seem to have already attained, Psal. xxx. 7. *Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mauntain stand strong: Thou didst hide thy face; and I was troubled.* And no wonder, that the Lord is hereby provoked to hide his face from a Christian: for this is a sin exceedingly grieving to the Holy Spirit. It is directly contrary to the end for which he grants sensible manifestations or sensible comfort to any; which end is, that they may be encouraged to persevere in the exercise of faith. Christians often find that the strong bias of their hearts to rest in sensible attainments includes many great evils; such as, an obstinate attachment to the idol of self-righteousness, sloth, carnal security; evils which are highly dishonouring to God, pernicious to the soul, and gratifying to the devil. Paul had much sensible assurance; but did he live by it? No; he says, *I live by the faith of the Son of God.* Did he stand by it? No; says he, *By faith we stand.* Did he confide or glory in it? He abhorred the thought of doing so. *God forbid,* says he, *that I should glory, save in the cross,* that is, the blood and righteousness, *of our Lord Jesus Christ. I count all things, but loss and dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ.* Did he rest in it? No, says he: *forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which were before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Hence appears the great injustice of Mr. Bellamy's accusation against Aspasio on account of the passage

just now quoted. It is true, as Mr. Bellamy says, "when the storm arises, the house that is built upon "the sand, will be like a tottering wall." Yes, and that is the very reason why Aspasio cautions us so much against resting on what we seem to have already attained; and directs us to build upon nothing as our foundation but the righteousness of Christ and the free promises of God in him. Mr. Bellamy also remarks, that "the faith of the saints is victorious:" But it is obvious that what Aspasio represents as apt to fail, is not the faith of the saints, but their sense or feeling rested in. He adds, "None will eat of the tree of life, "but he that overcometh." This was never denied by Aspasio. But he judges, that the way to overcome, is to make use of the shield of faith, whereby the fiery darts of satan may be quenched; and not to sit down upon what sensible evidences of a gracious state may have been already attained.

In short, Mr. Bellamy's opponents have taught nothing on this head, from which it can be inferred, that they meant to decry or depreciate the assurance of sense. On the contrary, they always represented it as very precious, as the beginning of heaven; and pressed their hearers and readers to use the most vigorous endeavours to attain it. Only, in such passages as those now quoted, they directed Christians to keep it in its proper place, and put them on their guard against the abuse of it; particularly, that which arises from the remainder of legalism in the hearts of believers; and also to give faithful warning to many formal professors, who have a pretended assurance founded on some experience of superficial conviction and delusive comforts, while they are strangers to the very first step of true godliness, that of believing the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ.

Before we conclude this letter, it may be proper to take notice of another passage in Mr. Marshal's treatise; where, after several remarks concerning self-examination, he adds these words: "You need not "trouble yourself to find out a multitude of marks and "signs of true grace; if you can find a few good ones. "Particularly, you may know that *you are passed from* "*death to life, if you love the brethren*: that is, if you "love all whom you can in charity judge to be true "believers, and for the truth's sake that dwelleth in "them." This passage Mr. Bellamy censures in the following words: "Your few good ones are all counterfeit, if alone, separate from other good ones. For "the true saint receives every grace from Christ, John "i. 16. Nor did Christ mean to single out a few, in "his sermon; but to give a brief summary of the whole "Christian life. *And he that heareth these sayings of* "*mine and doth them*,—not a few of them,—but doth "them one and all. If there is not all, there is none."

On these words we may observe, that they imply a charge against Mr. Marshal, as if he taught that a person might have one of the genuine, saving graces of the Spirit, without the rest. But this is a supposition directly contrary to the scope of his whole treatise, which is to shew that we are by faith to receive a new holy frame of soul, which includes all the graces of the Spirit, out of the fulness of Christ; and that all spiritual life and holiness continue, grow or decay in us, according as faith continueth, groweth or decayeth in vigour. Because Mr. Marshal intimates that a true believer does not always discern every grace of the Spirit in himself and his doing all the sayings of Christ, as marks or signs of true grace; it will not follow, that he ever meant to teach, that a true believer is destitute of any of the graces of the Spirit, or allows himself in

the neglect of any of the sayings of Christ. For while our sanctification is imperfect, it will still be one thing to have *in reality* the graces of the Spirit and a universal regard to the sayings of Christ; and another thing *to be sensible* of these attainments, and able to reflect upon them and discern them as certain marks of grace. The actings of one grace in a Christian may be more distinct and sensible, than those of another grace. Hence the scripture represents particular saints as excelling, some in one grace, some in another; Moses in meekness, Job in patience, and so forth. This seems to be the case, in some measure, with every Christian. Now, if there be any one particular gracious exercise which is more distinct than another, more sensible, and more easily traced to an unfeigned faith as its principle; why may not this be allowed to be a sufficient mark of a saving interest in Christ, even when the other graces of the Spirit may be much out of sight; provided always that the supposed exercise is attended with an abiding concern to have the exercise of all the other graces of the Spirit?

This way of speaking is not peculiar to Mr. Marshal. "If you can find but one mark," says a valuable writer, "you may draw a favourable conclusion. Should "you have reason to conclude, that you love the bre- "thren, that you love them for the image of Christ in "them, you need not hesitate about your state: for this "love is the exercise or going out of that grace which "God has implanted. Sometimes one mark appears "visible and sometimes another. If you have but one, "be thankful, and give God all the glory*."

* See the xxvith of Pike and Hayward's Cases of Conscience.

LETTER IX.

On the faith of the Gospel, as necessary to reconcile our heart to the law.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

MR. MARSHAL and those who teach the same doctrine are represented by Mr. Bellamy as "denying, "that the law of God was holy, just and good antece- "dently to the gift of Christ; or that it must appear "such to every one whose eyes are opened to see it as "it is." Hence Mr. Bellamy calls his opponents "Antinomians of the devouter sort, who profess the "assurance of the love of God, and at the same time "appear the most avowed enemies of the law of God." He represents them as teaching, that if God were to deal with men according to the tenor of his law, he would "act the part of a tyrant; that it is proper for "him, not for sinners, to repent; that he ought to lay "aside his law as unreasonable, sinful, wicked and "tyrannical*."

Heavier charges could not have been brought against the grossest heresy that ever infested the Christian church, than these which Mr. Bellamy brings against the doctrine of Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston and Mr. Hervey. The passage in Mr. Marshal's treatise, which is principally insisted on as the ground of these charges, is the following. "Slavish fear," says he, "may ex- "tort some slavish, hypocritical performances from us, "such as that of Pharoah in letting the Israelites go,

* Mr. Bellamy's Dial. p. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. Essay on the Nature and the Glory, &c. p. 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 34.

" sore against his will; but the duty of love cannot " be extorted and forced by fear, but it must be won " and sweetly allured by an apprehension of God's love " and goodness towards us; as that eminent, loving, " and beloved disciple testifieth, 1 John iv. 18, 19. " *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out* " *fear; because fear hath torment: he that feareth is* " *not made perfect in love. We love him, because he* " *first loved us.* Observe here, that we cannot be be- " forehand with God in loving him, before we appre- " hend his love to us. That conscience, whereby we " judge ourselves to be under the guilt of sin and the " wrath of God, is accounted an evil conscience in " scripture, though it perform its office truly; because " it is caused by the evil of sin, and will itself be a " cause of our committing more sin, until it can judge " us to be justified from all sin and received into the " favour of God. This evil guilty conscience so dis- " affecteth people towards God, that it cannot endure, " that they should think, or speak or hear of him or " his law; or that they should not rather strive to put " him out of their minds by fleshly pleasures and " worldly enjoyments."

By this doctrine, according to Mr. Bellamy, sinners are emboldened to express themselves before their Maker in the following blasphemous manner: " The Di- " vine law is so intolerably cruel, that, unless it is en- " tirely set aside as to us, we can never be pacified to- " ward our Creator. We proclaim in the sight of hea- " ven, our cause is so just, that we can never lay down " our arms, fall at the foot of our Sovereign and justi- " fy his law: nay, we can never have one good thought

" of him; till he first set aside his law, remove his curse, " and grant us heaven upon our demand*."

The flagrant injustice of this charge against Mr. Marshal is manifest from the following considerations.

1. None can be more express than Mr. Marshal in asserting the unchangeable righteousness of the law. " The principal duties," says he, " of love to God above " all and to each other for his sake, whence all the other " duties flow, are so excellent, that I cannot imagine " any more noble work for the holy angels in their glo- " rious sphere. They are the chief works, for which " we were first framed in the image of God engraven " upon man in his first creation, and for which that " beautiful image is renewed upon us in our new crea- " tion and sanctification by Jesus Christ, and shall be " perfected in our glorification. They are works which " depend not merely on the sovereignty of the will of " God to be commanded, or forbidden, or left indiffer- " ent, or changed, or abolished at his pleasure; as " other works which belong either to the judicial or " ceremonial law, or to the means of salvation prescrib- " ed by the gospel; but they are, in their own nature, " holy, just and good, Rom. vii. 12. and meet for us to " perform, because of our relation to our Creator and " fellow-creatures. So that they have an inseparable " dependance upon the holiness of the will of God, and " thereby an indespensable establishment. They are " duties which we are naturally obliged to by that rea- " son and understanding, which God gave to man at his " first creation, to discern what was just and meet for " him to do. And the law, that requires them, is cal- " led the natural law and also the moral law; because " the manners of all men, Infidels as well as Christians,

* Dialogue p. 12.

" ought to be conformed to it, under the penalty of the " wrath of God for the violation of it. This is the true " morality, which God approveth, consisting in the con- " formity of all our actions to the moral law. If those, " who contend for morality, understand no other than " this, I dare join with them in asserting, that the best " morally honest man is the greatest saint; and that " morality is the principal part of true religion, and the " test of all the other parts; without which faith is " dead, and all religious performances are a vain shew " and mere hypocrisy. For the faithful and true wit- " ness hath testified concerning the two great moral " commandments of love to God and our neighbour, " that there is none other commandment greater than " these; and that on them *hang all the law and the* " *prophets*, Matth. xxii. 36—40. Mark xii. 31.*"

2. It is unjust to infer, that Mr. Marshal denied the obligation men are under, in point of duty, to have their heart reconciled to the holy and righteous law of God; because he teaches, that true reconciliation of heart to that law cannot be attained by men, in their present fallen state, without the faith of salvation by Jesus Christ. Mr. Marshal was far from admitting the Arminian position, that we are under no moral obligation to do what our present fallen state has rendered us unable to do. " They," says he, " who ac- " count their impotence a sufficient plea to excuse " them or others, shew that they were never truly " humbled for that great wilful transgression of all " mankind in the loins of Adam. Inability to pay debt " excuseth not a debtor who hath lavished away his " estate. Our impotence consisteth not in a mere

* See the Gospel mystery, &c. in the explication of the first Direction.

"want of executive power, but in the want of a willing "mind to practice true holiness and righteousness. "This is their just condemnation, that they love dark- "ness rather than light. They deserve to be partakers "with the devils, as they partake with them in their "evil lusts; and their inability to do good will no "more excuse them, than it excuseth devils*." The truth is, a minister may as well be charged with denying the natural obligation of men to be reconciled to the law of God, for teaching that regeneration is necessary to their attainment of that end, as for teaching that the faith of the gospel is so.

3. When Mr. Marshal teaches that men cannot have a sincere love to the law according to its spirituality and vast extent, while they have no believing view of reconciliation with God through Christ; he evidently means, while they consider themselves as under the curse of God. To be under the curse is to be under a sentence of exclusion, not only from all true comfort, but also from any the least participation of sanctifying grace. And how is a person to love the law, while he considers it as excluding him from that grace without which he cannot love it? "When Adam," says Mr. Marshal, "had once brought himself and all his poste- "rity under the terrible sentence, *Thou shalt surely die*; "all that knowledge of God or his law, which before "wrought for the continuance of life, was turned by that "cursing sentence the contrary way, to work for his "death, even for the death of his soul in sin, as well as "for the death of his body: and therefore it quickly "moved him to hide himself from God as his enemy." If it be objected here, that Christ was under the curse of the law, and yet had no sin;—we answer, that we

* Gospel Mystery, &c. Direct. 5th.

must distinguish between what is essential and what is accidental, to the punishment of sin. The former is the same, whoever is the sufferer of the punishment: the latter is varied according to the quality of the sufferer. Thus, the curse, subjecting men to all the misery, of which they are capable, shuts them up under the dominion of sin; which is a principal part of that misery. But, falling upon the surety, it found him an infinitely different subject, even such a one as was altogether incapable of sin; and yet capable of suffering the punishment due to sin. Thus a punishment, inflicted upon a person already under the power of some wasting disease, will necessarily occasion his death; but inflicted upon a person of a sound constitution, will not so much as endanger his health.

4. When Mr. Marshal says, that, "if we look "upon God as contrary to us, as hating us, as purpo- "sing to damn us; our own innate self-love will breed "hatred and heart-risings against him in spite of our "hearts;" he speaks of men's legal attempts to reconcile themselves to holiness by their natural resolution or ability; while they despise and reject the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. All that he intends by this representation is to shew the vanity of that pretended virtue or holiness, which men seem to attain under the influence of legal principles and motives without faith in Jesus Christ; that virtue being such only as may be found in those who have nothing of the true love of God or of his law in their hearts. That this is his meaning appears from the very plan of his treatise; one principal part of which was to prove, that the persuasion of our reconciliation with God (in opposition to the consideration of ourselves as under the curse) is to be received out of Christ's fulness by unison and fel-

lowship with him†. The same thing is evident from the very paragraph in the explication of the vii. Direction, whence some of the expressions, so severely censured by Mr. Bellamy, are taken. "The first right, "holy thoughts," says he, "which thou canst have of "God are thoughts of his grace to thy soul in Christ, "which are included in the grace of faith. Get these "thoughts by believing in Christ, and they will breed "in thee love to God and all good thoughts of him, and "free thee from blasphemous murmuring thoughts by "degrees; for love thinks no evil. Thou wilt then *be* "*able* to account God just and merciful, if he had damned "thee, and extended his grace to others; and thou "wilt *be able* to think well of his holiness and of his "decrees, which many cannot endure to hear of. The "way to get rid of raging lusts is by faith that purifi-"eth the heart and worketh by love. Beg a holy fear "of God, with fear of coming short of the promised "rest through unbelief, Heb. iv. i. Such a fear is an "ingredient in faith." It is astonishing, indeed, how Mr. Bellamy came to charge Mr. Marshal with the horrid blasphemy of making the law of God culpable for the wickedness of our heart-risings against its precept and penalty: while Mr. Marshal declares abundantly, that the fault is not in the holy law, but only in our own hearts; and while it is the great design of his treatise to direct poor sinners to union and fellowship with Christ through faith, as the only effectual means of being delivered from such heart-rising, and of attaining true heart-felt delight in the law of the Lord.

Having offered these things in vindication of Mr. Marshal's doctrine, we are next to consider the opposite opinion of Mr. Bellamy, which runs through a great

† Gospel Mystery, &c. Direction 3d.

part of his dialogues and letters, and of his essay on the nature and glory of the gospel. It is plainly expressed in the following passages. "The awakened sinner under a lively sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, with particular aplication to himself, must (through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit be brought to approve the law in all its rigour, as holy, just and good, as being really amiable and glorious in itself, *before* he can so much as believe (in the Scripture sense) the gospel to be true*. The law appeared holy, just and good: I could not but approve it from my very heart: and said within myself, ere ever I was aware, let all heaven for ever love and adore the infinitely glorious majesty, although I receive my just desert and perish for ever. Next came into view the gospel way of life by free grace through Jesus Christ †." "To have holiness appear beautiful to the soul is of the same nature as to love holiness; but to love holiness is holiness itself.‡"

Thus, according to this author, a sinner must be reconciled to the law: he must have such a sight of the holiness of the law as will cause him to love it, that is, he must have holiness itself: he must feel, that he has all this, before he can so much as believe (in the scripture sense) the gospel to be true; nay, before he have any saving view of the gospel at all.

The notion expressed by Mr. Bellamy, in the words now quoted, is disapproved, as unsound, for such reasons as the following.

1. It appears to be inconsistent with that conviction of sin and misery which is supposed and implied

* Mr. Bellamy's Dialog. p. 17. † Let. 2d. p. 115.
‡ Essay on the Nature and Glory, &c. p. 164.

in the first act of faith. When a man has this conviction, as Luther in his commentary on the epistle to the Galatians observes, "the law reveals to him his "sin, his blindness, his misery, his impiety, ignorance, "hatred and contempt of God; death, hell, the judg- "ment and deserved wrath of God." Thus conviction, before the discovery of Christ in the gospel, instead of reconciling the heart to the law, has an irritating effect, making the powerful working of sin more impetuous and sensible, than before. The apostle assures us of this from his own experience, Rom. vii. 8, 9. *Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For, without the law, sin was dead: For I was alive without the law once;* that is, I lived securely, pleased with the opinion of my own righteousness: *but when the commandment came* in its spirituality and power; *sin revived, and I died,* that is, sin raged more than ever; I hated the law more than ever; because it overturned the fabrick of self-righteousness which I had been labouring to build. "When "sin is discovered," says Luther, "by certain bright "beams, breaking into the heart, there is nothing more "odious and more intolerable to man than the law." All the conviction by the law to be found in man before faith in Christ, is of the same sort with that represented by the apostle in the words now cited. The approbation of the law which the apostle expresses from the 14th verse to the end of the chapter, is of a quite different kind: it is the experience of a true believer; of one whom *the law of the spirit of life* (which may well be understood of the gospel, called in another place, *the ministration of the Spirit*) *hath made free from the law of sin and death.*

This notion of Mr. Bellamy is inconsistant with those passages of scripture, which call sinners to come

to Christ, while they have *no money*, no good qualification, Isai. lv. 1. It is unecessary to understand *the thirsting* there mentioned of any other than the vain desire and expectation of satisfaction in earthly things or in self-righteousness which is represented in the 2d verse. *Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* But according to Mr. Bellamy, none are to come to Christ, till they find they have got such a view of the holiness of God's law, as engages them to love it. It is good news to poor sinners, that Christ is come to them in the character of the Physician of souls. But when they are told, that they must have such love to holiness as is holiness itself, or that they must be in a great measure healed, *before* or *in order* to their application to him, the refreshing import of these news is quite destroyed; espeicially to those under thorough convictions of their sinful and miserable condition: which, in their apprehension, is so far from being in a more hopeful way by the application of the law, that, before they obtain a saving discovery of Christ in the gospel, they consider their case as every moment growing worse, and every moment in hazard of being beyond all possibility of relief.

3. The falsehood of the opinion in question appears from the necessity of the faith of the gospel as the appointed mean of reconciling our hearts to the law. That the faith of the gospel has this effect is certainly the doctrine of the Bible; as, by that faith, men apprehend, that they are delivered from the law as a covenant or condition of life, Rom. vi. 14. having no more to do with the law under that consideration, than a woman has to do with her deceased husband; Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4. and that it only remains to be regarded in the new and

engaging light of a rule of life in the hand of the blessed Mediator; requiring of believers universal obedience as a testimony of their interest in and of their gratitude for his great salvation; and as an acknowledgement of their absolute subjection to his royal authority, 1 Corinth. ix. 21. Isai. xxxiii. 22. Farther, the faith of the gospel reconciles us to the law; as, in the gospel-promises, it apprehends abundant security for all that grace which is requisite to dispose and enable us to an acceptable obedience. Faith hears God in Christ saying to us, *I am the Lord who sanctifieth you. I will put my laws into your inward parts, and write them on your hearts. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. My grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

4. We have no ground to believe that the Holy Spirit acts in fallen men, (particularly in adults) as a sanctifying Spirit, reconciling them to the law, otherwise than as a Spirit of faith, causing them to know and receive the gospel. We are truely reconciled to the law no farther than as we are changed into the image of the Lord Christ, by *beholding his glory* in the glass of the gospel; which *beholding* we owe to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinth. iii. 18. "The "beginning of the new life," says Witsius, "is not "from the preaching of the law, but of the gospel. "The gospel is the seed of our regeneration and the "law of the Spirit of life which frees us from the law "of sin and death. While Christ is preached and life "in Christ, the Spirit of Christ secretly enters into the "souls of the elect, and creates in them the principal of "spiritual life, James i. 18. *Of his own will he begat us "with the word of truth.* Gal. iii. 2. *Received ye the "Spirit by the hearing of faith?*†"

† Animadversiones Irenicæ, cap. xv.

Mr. Bellamy, in attempting to support this opinion, makes use of some reasonings without adducing any plain testimonies of scripture; a method which is always to be suspected in treating of revealed truth. "If," says he, "the Divine Law, is a holy, just, good "and glorious law, antecedent to the consideration of "the gift of Christ, then it must of necessity appear "such, to every one whose eyes are opened to see it "as it is. He who, has not such a sight of the law is "spiritually blind*." Therefore, he concludes that reconciliation of heart to the law must go before the faith of the gospel.

Answer. This argument implies, that the immediate effect of regeneration is to bring us to a heart-reconciling view of the law, as contradistinguished from the covenant of grace or the gospel. But as regeneration is a benefit of the covenant of grace, altogether unknown to the law or covenant of works; so the immediate effect of that benefit, when it is granted to any soul, is the opening of the eyes of the understanding to behold the wonderful things of the covenant of grace. In John i. 12, 13. the receiving of Christ is represented as that unto which we are immediately born of God, and in Ephes. i. 19. we read of *the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power*; intimating, that whenever persons are the subjects of this Almighty operation, they are believers. Regeneration is the Father's drawing us, not to the law-covenant, but to faith in Jesus Christ, John vi. 44. Nor is that which is given in regeneration to be understood of some ability only or power to believe. For, as Dr.

*Essay on the Nature and Glory, &c. p. 21.

Owen observes, "there is nothing mentioned in scrip-
"ture concerning the communicating of power remote
"or next to the mind of man, to enable him to believe
"antecedently unto actual believing†." It is true, after the first act of believing, persons have habitual or indwelling grace; which, however, is not able or sufficient to produce any spiritual act, otherwise than by the renewed effectual working of the Spirit of Christ. This working of Christ upon and with the grace, which we have received, is called his enabling us. But with persons unregenerate, and, as to the first act of faith, it is not so. God does not educe that act out of any pre-existing habit, but works it immediately. Thus it is given us on the behalf of Christ to believe on him. But how is it given us? By the power of God working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Philip i. 29. ii. 13. Such is the regeneration which we read of in scripture; but of another regeneration, previous to this, we do not read.

Again, it may be observed, that the principle of this argument tends to make the gospel-revelation unnecessary. The law, considered antecedently to the gift of Christ, must be the covenant of works: for it was only in that view that man had to do with the law antecedently to the gift of Christ. Now if, through the regenerating influence of the Spirit, men get such a view of the law-covenant, as delivers them from their enmity against God; then it will follow, that men not only may be, but actually are saved by the law or covenant of works internally revealed in their minds, or by a spiritual view of the glory of God manifested in that covenant. Thus the law of works is supposed to

† On the Spirit, book third, chap. v. sect. 36.

be, directly by itself and considered antecedently to the gift of Christ, an effectual mean of giving life to the dead soul, and of taking away the natural enmity of the heart. All this is directly contrary to those scriptures in which the law is said to have a killing, instead of a quickening effect upon fallen men, and to be the strength of sin, 1 Corinth. xv. 56. 2 Corinth. iii. Rom. vi. 5. Farther, if, according to Mr. Bellamy's supposition, men be saved by the law in some degree, why not in a greater degree? why not fully? The reconciliation of the heart to the holiness of the law, attained, according to him, by the just views of the law which the Holy Spirit gives the sinner in or immediately after regeneration, being a real salvation, the person supposed to be the subject of this work needs only an increase of these views of the law attended with the same efficacy. Where then is the necessity of the gospel of Jesus Christ or of faith in it?

The following is another of Mr. Bellamy's arguments on this head. "You can never acquiesce," says he, "in the blood of Christ as honourable to God, "till the law first appears glorious in your eyes. You "will rather feel the heart of an infidel in your breast."

Answer. It seems too assuming and dictatorial to say, as Mr. Bellamy does here, Unless God make the law appear glorious and amiable to the sinner in the very way that I think most proper, it is not possible for his power and grace to make it appear so to the sinner in any other way. Why may not God give the elect soul a joint view of Christ's righteousness, and of the law as magnified and made honourable by that blessed righteousness? May not the Lord, in a work of legal conviction, give the sinner very clear and distinct,

though not heart-reconciling views of the law, as holy, just and good? May not the sinner under such a work have his mouth stopped, seeing himself shut up under the commanding and condemning power of the law-covenant? May he not be brought to stand at the bar of God, stript of every plea and driven to despair? May he not thus be brought to conclude, that his salvation is utterly inconsistent with the honour of God's law and justice? This is a great work; and yet it is no more than what reprobates themselves shall be brought to, sooner or later. There is nothing in all this of regenerating or saving grace. The most agonizing convictions may be, where there is no saving conversion. But who dare deny, that the former often precede the latter; or that the awful views, which persons get, before regeneration, of the law-curse, may be of use in or after that supernatural change, both to help them to a right understanding of the gospel of Christ, and to excite them to flee for refuge to the hope set before them? *Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law.* By faith in Jesus Christ we give it the highest honour, both as a covenant and as a rule of life. As a covenant, it is hereby presented with a righteousness wrought out by the Son of God in our nature; which not only answers all its demands, but magnifies and makes it honourable. As a rule of life, it is regarded as the perfect standard of that conformity to God in holiness, which is promised in the covenant of grace; which constitutes a principal part of our blessedness; after which we are incessantly to aspire while here, and which we hope to attain fully hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Such views of the law, as thus magnified and made honourable in Christ, are the most effectual means of reconciling the heart to it.

But, it is said, we turned enemies to God first, and therefore we are first to be reconciled unto God before he be reconciled unto us.

Answer. It may as well be said, that we ought to do all that the law requires, before God be reconciled to us. This indeed, is the plan of the covenant of works; but is diametrically opposite to the plan of the new covenant, which is designed to cut off all occasion of creature-boasting; to set forth man's impotence and nothingness; and to display the exceeding riches of the grace of God in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. A great part of Mr. Bellamy's declamation proceeds upon this supposition, that whatever could not and should not have had place according to the old broken covenant, has not and cannot have place according to the new and everlasting covenant; a supposition which takes away the essential difference between the two covenants.

The promise, says the apostle, *is of faith, that it may be of grace*†. It is manifestly of grace, when faith embraces it upon no other ground than the direction of it to sinners of mankind who read or hear it: but the case would be quite otherwise, were the faith, of our interest in the promise founded, according to Mr. Bellamy's plan, upon our sincere approbation of the law, our love to God's holiness, and other morally good qualifications; just as man's claim to the promise of eternal life, if he had continued upright, would have been founded upon his own perfect obedience.

† Rom. iv. 16.

LETTER X.

On the faith of the Gospel, as necessary in order to our attainment of true Love to God.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

LOVE to God is the chief and most necessary duty of all reasonable creatures. Hence our religious tenets may be justly tried by their tendency to promote this heavenly affection. On this account it is necessary to take notice of the following charges which Mr. Bellamy brings against the doctrine of his opponents.

1. He complains, "that many look upon the notion of loving God for himself as a mere chimera*." But who are they that do so? Not Mr. Marshal, who tells us, "that the duties of love to God above all, and to "each other for his sake, are of the greatest excellency; that we are to love every thing in God, his "justice, holiness, sovereign authority, all-seeing eye "and all his decrees, commands, judgments and doings. "We are to love him not only better than other things, "but singly as the only good, the fountain of all goodness." The sanctifying, says he in another place, and glorifying of God's name in all things is the first and chief petition, Matth. vi. 9. and is the end we ought to aim at in all our acting, 1 Cor. x. 31. Not Mr. Boston, who says in his Fourfold State, "A real "Christian is one who loves God for himself as well as "for his benefits; and that with a supreme love above

* Dial. i. p. 21.

"all persons and all things." Not Mr. Hervey, who directs us to put such questions to ourselves as the following: "Have we duly acquainted ourselves with "the marvellous excellencies of the Lord Jehovah? "Have we loved him with all our heart? Is our esteem "for this immensely great and most blessed Being, "high, superlative, matchless, like that expressed by "the Psalmist: *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and "there is none upon earth, whom I desire besides thee**?" Not the ministers in a state of secession from the established church of Scotland, who, in their Judicial Testimony, published in the year 1736, in opposition to the opinion of Mr. Campbel, too much countenanced by the General Assembly of that church, express themselves in the following manner: "It is evident "from the Word, that God's infinite perfections and "glorious excellencies are the main ground and reason "of our loving, obeying and worshipping him, and not "chiefly his benefits to us and his promoting our happiness: and though the prospect of it may be a secondary motive to our obedience; yet the scriptures "declare, that what God is in himself, or his own infinite perfection, is the primary ground and formal "reason of the whole of our obedience and worship. "And all, who truly love God, do love him chiefly for "himself."

2. Mr. Bellamy represents his opponents as holding, that it is not the duty of unregenerate men, previous to the knowledge of the way of reconciliation to God through Christ, to love God on account of the goodness and excellency of his nature†: whereas Mr.

* Theron and Aspasio, Letter I.

† Dial. i. p. 10. "The first question is, Whether unregenerate sinners ought to love God."

Marshal could not declare, that it is their duty more expressly, than he does, in the very words quoted by Mr. Bellamy himself. "The duties of love to God," says Mr. Marshal, "and of love to our neighbour for his "sake, are, in their nature, holy, just, good and meet "for us to perform, because of our natural relation to "our Creator and fellow creatures. So that they have "an inseparable dependance upon the holiness of the "will of God, and an indispensable establishment "thereby. Even heathens are still obliged to the love "of God and their neighbour by the light of nature "without any written law or supernatural revelation."

3. He represents it as the doctrine of his opponents, that men may have faith in God as their reconciled God, and may love him, without regeneration. "Your faith," says he, meaning that which is taught by Mr. Marshal, "may exist in an unregenerate heart: "from the principles of nature we may love God "*thus**."

Here we may observe, that Mr. Bellamy's opponents teach that unregenerate men are warranted and commanded to believe in Jesus Christ for their own salvation; and to love God above all things; but *not*, that they either do so, or have ability to do so. But what seems to have induced Mr. Bellamy to bring this charge against these divines, is his displeasure with them for teaching, that the faith of reconciliation with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is necessary to our attainment of true love to God. This he denies; for, says he, "in regeneration which is before faith, "our hearts begin to be right; therefore then, even at

* Dialog. ii. p. 79. - Dial. i. p. 20.

"that instant, we begin to love God for his own love-
"liness." We answer, that we are indeed brought by regeneration to love God for his own loveliness. But then regeneration has this effect, as it produces faith. Regeneration proceeds from God as a reconciled God in Christ, and causeth us to regard him in that engaging light, as was shewn in the preceding letter.

When we say, that faith is the means of attaining the exercise of love to God, what we intend by faith is not a dream of peace with God which is grounded upon the conceit of self-righteousness and other delusive imaginations; and which may, no doubt, be found in unregenerate men; but such a faith of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as is grounded on the gospel-promise and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Nor is it meant, that our act of believing, can, of itself, slay the enmity of our hearts and warm them with true love to God; but that the object, apprehended by faith, the virtue of Christ's death, and the grace of the promise, are effectual to that end. Faith is a self-emptying exercise; it makes no pretension to any wisdom, righteousness or power in itself; but finds all in its glorious object, Christ Jesus: particularly, it finds in him a sufficiency of grace to circumcise the heart to love God, according to that promise, which we have in Deuteron. xxx. 6. *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart to love the Lord thy God.*

From John iv. 19. *We love him, because he first loved us;* Mr. Marshal observes, "that we cannot be "beforehand in loving God, before we apprehend his "love to us." But no, says Mr. Bellamy: "we begin "to love God before we know that he begins to "love us."

Answer. The special love of God to us may, indeed, be inferred from our sincere love to him. But it will not follow, that there is no apprehension at all of the love of God in Christ to us, at the beginning of our exercise of love to him. For the love of God apprehended by the direct act of faith may begin that exercise; which may be afterwards promoted by reflecting upon the fruits and evidences of his love, as well as by the frequent renewing of that act. It cannot well be denied, that the text now quoted leads us to think, that the exercise of our love to God is begun by means of the direct act of faith, as it apprehends the preventing love of God in Christ. For this verse is to be understood in connexion with v. 16. where the apostle says, *We have known and believed the love which God hath to us:* that is, the love manifested in Christ *the Saviour of the world*, v. 14. and *the propitiation for our sins*, v. 10. Hence it appears, that what is most immediately and directly intended by the expression, *He first loved us*, is not the secret love of God in eternal election, nor the secret operation of it in regeneration; but the publick manifestation of his love in the gift of Christ as exhibited in the gospel; even that discovery of his love which is the object of the direct act of faith. This view of the text under consideration is confirmed by observing, that the apostle, in setting forth God as the object of our superlative love, uses this eminently sublime expression, GOD IS LOVE; intimating, that we cannot love God, till we know him to be love, pure love, without any mixture of wrath against us, in Jesus Christ, his beloved Son.

But Mr. Bellamy is positive, that this expression, *We have known and believed the love which God hath to us*, must be understood of a knowledge and belief

founded on the consciousness of such good qualifications in ourselves as are certain evidences of our being the children of God. "What is the character," says he, "of the men who use this confident language? "Were they saints or sinners? They knew, they were "the children of God, because they knew God, loved "him and kept his commandments, imitated the ex"ample of Christ, loved the brethren, &c.*"

Answer. That such qualifications, as Mr. Bellamy enumerates, are the characters of those, who know and believe the love which God hath to them, is granted and abundantly taught by his opponents. But in order to overthrow the sense in which this text was understood by these authors, he should have shewn not only that, according to the apostle, these characters belong to those who truly know and believe the love of God to them; but also that the consciousness of such attainments is the only ground of that knowledge and belief. The context, as we have already observed, leads us to consider this knowledge and belief as proceeding upon the ground of the gospel-testimony in verses 14 and 10. Calvin's observation on this verse appears to be solid. *We have known and believed;* that is, says he, "we "have known by believing. In a preceding verse the "apostle had represented faith as our believing, that "Jesus is the Son of God: but here he says, by faith "we know the love of God towards us." "Taught "by Jesus Christ we know and believe," says another expositer in Marlorate's collection, "with our whole "heart, that the infinite Majesty of God loves us, "does not reject the unworthy and the sinner; does "not abhor the unjust, nor despise the weak and con-

* Dial. i. page 23.

"temptible. And why should we not know and believe "all this; while we behold his own Son, the unspeaka- "bly precious pledge of Divine love, taking away our "sins by his death, and bearing us on his shoulders to "the Father." These commentators, as well as Mr. Marshal, understood the apostle's words here, of the direct act of faith.

"If you leave," says Mr. Bellamy, "the glory of "the Divine Majesty, as he is in himself, out of the "account, and love and worship him merely for his "love to you &c. how will you free yourself from the "guilt of idolatry.*"

This objection, (which, in the various repetitions of it, runs through a great part of Mr. Bellamy's work,) was anticipated in the following passage of Mr. Marshal's treatise. "It is not legal or mercenary," says he, "to be moved by the persuasion of the future en- "joyment of everlasting happiness, while the persua- "sion itself is not gotten by the works of the law, but "by free grace through faith, Gal. v. 5. It is not that "carnal self-love, which the scripture condemneth as "the mother of sinfulness, 2 Tim. iii. 2. but an holy "self-love inclining us to prefer God above the flesh "and the world, such as God directeth us unto, when "he exhorteth us *to save ourselves*, Act. ii. 40. 1 Tim. "iv. 16. It is so far from being contrary to the pure "love of God, that it brings us to love God more pure- "ly and entirely. He draweth us to love him by the "cords of a man, by such cords as the love of man "useth to be drawn by, even by his own love to us."

Mr. Bellamy's doctrine may accord with the speculations of some Platonick philosophers, but not with the

* Dial. i. page 27.

simplicity of revealed religion†. He supposes, that, if our love to God be influenced by the belief of our reconciliation to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, it is not genuine love to God, but self-love. From this opinion it would follow, that the Psalmist was only loving himself, when he loved God as *his strength, his rock, fortress and deliverer, his God and the horn of his salvation, his high tower*, Psal. xviii. 1, 2. The first Christians according to this opinion, were only lovers of their ownselves, when *the love of Christ*, manifested in his giving himself *for them, constrained them;* though, by this means, they *lived not to themselves, but to him.* God himself frequently inforces his commands with this declaration, *I am the Lord thy God‡;* intimating that he would have them believe their special interest in him as a principal incentive to the obedience of love.

† This doctrine, "That God is to be loved for himself," and "That the manifestation, which he makes of himself in "the hearts and consciences of his rational creatures, and in the "works of creation, is a sufficient means of bringing them to love "him for himself," is no other than natural religion; and would, no doubt, have been verified in man, if he had continued upright. But the way of bringing fallen men to the true love of God by means of faith in Jesus Christ as having loved them and given himself for them, is purely a matter of supernatural revelation. Hence it appears, that, if what Mr. Bellamy teaches, namely, that men attain true love to God, before the gospel come into view, were agreeable to fact, there would be no need of the gospel: natural religion would be sufficient. For they who love God for himself are, no doubt, truly blessed. Thus it is evident, that the doctrine which Mr. Bellamy would substitute instead of that which Mr. Marshal teaches, is rank Deism; and is that which leads many professed Christians to hold, That the heathens may be saved by living according to the light they have; an opinion directly opposite to the Scripture, which assures us, that *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh*, no one of the human race, Jew or Gentile, without or within the church, *be justified in the sight of God.*

‡ Lev. xix. 3, 4, 10, 25, 31, 34, 36. xx. 7, 24.

Mr. Bellamy represents the appropriating faith of the love of God in Christ to us as alienating the heart from God and "leading it to seek its rest elsewhere‡." The scriptures, on the contrary, represent the Lord's loving kindness to us in Christ, apprehended by faith, as the rest and refreshing of our souls, Psal. lxiii. 3, 5. *Because thy loving kindness is better than life,—my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.* Psal. cxvi. 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Heb. iv. 3. *We, who have believed, do enter into rest*, that is, we enter into the promised rest in believing. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* says the Psalmist; *and there is none upon earth, whom I desire besides thee.* Thus, he represents the exercise of supreme love to God. And how did he attain this exercise? By the appropriating faith expressed in the preceding verses: *I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory**,

‡ Dial. i. page 30.

* Psal. lxxiii. 23, 24, 25. It is true, that hypocrites may have a strong conceit, that God loves them, exciting such natural emotions and affections, as they take to be love to God. But that conceit is widely different from the faith, which believers have, of the love of God in Christ to them, which is the means of producing in them true love to him. The conceit, which hypocrites have of God's love to them, is built upon a vain imagination; whereas the faith, which believers attain of the love of God to them in Christ, is founded upon his word. Hypocrites conceive God to be one like themselves, Psal. l. 21. and his love to them to be such as connives at and countenances their continuance in the neglect of known duty or the practice of known sin. But the faith of true Christians apprehends the love of God in Christ as taking away their sins, 1 John iii. 5. Hypocrites imagine, that they love God, because they feel a sort of natural gratitude to God for his benefits; whilst they regard nothing in these benefits but the gratification of corrupt

Farther, Mr. Bellamy represents the faith of God's love to us in Christ as leading persons to love the children of God "merely on selfish accounts; as because they love me, belong to my party &c."

But it may be asked, How does this assertion comport with the numerous passages of scripture, which hold forth the love of God towards us in Christ, as a principal motive to the love of the brethren; whilst that love can be no such motive to any but those who believe it? John xv. 12. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Ephes. v. 2. *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.* Coloss. iii. 13. *As Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* 1 John iv. 11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* According to these and other texts, the appropriating faith of the love of God in Christ to us is the most effectual means of kindling and maintaining in our hearts the fervent love of the brethren.

The following passage, taken from Dr. Owen's treatise on communion with God, will serve for a proper conclusion of this letter. "Flesh and blood," says he, "are apt to have very hard thoughts of God; to think, "that he is always angry, yea implacable; that it is

self. Whereas believers are brought to the exercise of true love to God by means of faith apprehending such a manifestation of God's love to them in Christ as serves most eminently to display the glory of his holiness, goodness, truth, and other perfections of his nature, 2 Corinth. iv. 6. Thus, they love God for himself as well as for his benefits: for, though the faith of God's love to them in Christ is the means of kindling love to him in their hearts; yet, as their love to him is supreme love, it can have no other proper ground, than his infinitely glorious excellencies, or what he is in himself.

" not for poor creatures to draw nigh to him; that no-
" thing in the world is more desirable than never to
" come into his presence, Isai. xxxiii. 16. *Who amongst*
" *us shall dwell with devouring fire? who amongst us*
" *shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* say the sinners
" in Zion. Luke xix. 21. *I knew that thou wast an*
" *austere man*, saith the evil servant. The Lord takes
" nothing worse at the hands of his people, than such
" hard thoughts of him, knowing full well what fruit
" this bitter root is like to bear; what alienation of
" heart, what drawing back, what unbelief and tergi-
" versation in our walking with him."

" Consider then, in the first place, that the receiv-
" ing of the Father as he holds out love to the soul,
" gives him the honour he aims at and is exceeding
" acceptable to him. He often sets forth his love in
" an eminent manner, that it may be so received. He
" commendeth it to us, Rom. v. 8. *Behold what manner*
" *of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!*"

" But some may say, Alas! how shall I hold com-
" munion with the Father in love? I know not at all
" whether he loves me or not. And shall I venture to
" cast myself upon it? How if I should not be accept-
" ed? Should I not rather perish for my presumption,
" than find sweetness in his bosom? God seems to me
" as a consuming fire and everlasting burning, so that
" I dread to look up unto him."

" I know not what may be understood by this know-
" ing of the love of God. Though it be carried on by
" spiritual sense and experience; yet it is first received
" PURELY BY BELIEVING. Our knowing it is just, our
" believing it as revealed. *We have known and believed*
" *the love that God hath to us: God is love*, 1 John iv.

"16. This is the assurance, which, at the very en-
"trance of walking with God, thou mayst have of
"this love. He who is truth hath said it. And what-
"ever thy heart or satan says, unless thou wilt take it
"up on this account, thou doest thy endeavour to make
"him a liar who hath spoken it, 1 John v. 10."

"I can believe, that God is love to others; for he
"hath said, He is love. But that he will be so to me,
"I see no ground of persuasion. There is no cause, no
"reason in the world why he should have one thought
"of love or kindness towards me; and therefore I dare
"not cast myself upon it to hold communion with him
"in his special love."

"He hath spoken it as particularly to thee as to any
"one in the world. With regard to a cause of love,
"he hath as much to fix it on thee as on any of the
"children of men; that is, none at all without himself.
"So that I shall make speedy work with this objection.
"Never any one from the foundation of the world,
"who believed such love in the Father, and made re-
"turns of love to him again, was deceived. Neither
"shall any to the world's end be deceived in so doing.
"Thou art then in this upon a most sure bottom. If
"thou believest and receivest the Father as love, he
"will infallibly be so to thee, though others may fall
"under his severity."

"But I cannot find my heart making returns of
"love unto God. Could I find my soul set upon him,
"I would then believe his soul delighted in me."

"This is the most preposterous course that possibly
"thy thoughts can pitch upon, a most ready way to rob
"God of his glory. *Herein is love*, saith the Holy
"Spirit, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*

" first. Now thou wouldst invert this order, and say, " Herein is love, not that God loved me, but that I " love him first. This is to take the glory of God " from him, that whereas he loves us without any " cause that is in ourselves, and we have all cause in " the world to love him; thou wouldst have the con- " trary, namely, that something should be in thee for " which God should love thee, even thy love to him; " and that thou shouldst love God before thou knowest " any thing lovely in him, namely, whether he love " thee or not. This is a course of the flesh's finding " out, that will never bring glory to God nor peace to " thy own soul. Lay down, then, thy reasonings. " Take up the love of the Father upon a pure act of " believing; and that will open thy soul to let it out " unto the Lord in the communion of love."

LETTER XI.

Of the Priority of Justification to the exercise of Evangelical Repentance.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE question, Whether a state of pardon goes before the first exercise of evangelical repentance, has been handled by various writers. The affirmative side appears to be sufficiently established by the arguments which Mr. Boston has advanced in his Miscellany Questions. The design of this letter is to state the same arguments, and to remove some exceptions to them offered by Mr. Bellamy and others.

To prevent the misconstruction of our doctrine on this head, the following observations are premised.

1. We hold, the exercise of repentance to be indispensably necessary, in all who are capable of it, not only as commanded by God, but as a mean, without which none may expect the comfortable enjoyment of communion with God, either here or hereafter.

2. When we speak of repentance being after justification, we speak of the order of nature, not of the order of time: for no justified person or true believer is impenitent. Farther, we speak of the formal exercise of repentance, not of the root of it. The root of repentance, being nothing else but the principle of spiritual life infused in regeneration, is the same with the root of all the other graces: in this respect, no one of these graces can be said to be either before or after another.

3. Repentance is either legal or evangelical. Legal repentance is a sorrow for sin and some forsaking of it, proceeding only from a fear of the judgment of God denounced in his law. Evangelical repentance is a godly sorrow for sin and a thorough renunciation of it, proceeding from faith's apprehension of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel; an apprehension which implies not only some general and slight taste of the gospel, but a rooted and firm dependance on it. It is granted, that there is a legal repentance before justification, but not an evangelical.

4. When God is said to forgive the sin of his people, it is to be understood, first, of the act of his free grace in bringing them into an unalterable state of actual justification, Coloss. ii. 13. Secondly, of the removal of rods, with which they have been visited, in

the way of fatherly correction, 2 Chron. vi. 25. Thirdly, of the intimations and comfortable sense, which the Lord affords them of their justified state, Psal. xxxii. 5. It is granted, that the exercise of evangelical repentance is before the forgiveness of sin, in the second and third senses, but not in the first.

Our doctrine on this head being understood according to these observations, we proceed to the proof of it in the following arguments.

I. The actual exercise of evangelical repentance does not go before our state of justification in the sight of God; because there is no acceptable performance of good works before the attainment of that privilege.

The force of this argument lies in the evidence of two positions, which are, That the exercise of evangelical repentance is a good work, and That good works do not go before, but follow justification.

As to the first position, That the exercise of evangelical repentance is a good work, it is too evident to need much illustration. The scriptural definition of a good work undoubtedly agrees to it; which definition is, something commanded in the word of God, done in faith, and having the glory of God for its chief end; Heb. xiii. 21. *May the God of peace—make you perfect in every good work, to do his will.* Matth. xv. 9. *In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Rom. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* Heb. xi. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* 1 Corinth. x. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink; or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* It may be called an evangelical work; not, indeed, as if it were not contained in the moral law; but as it, and every other truly good work, is done in the faith of

Christ, as our only righteousness and strength. Thus done, the work of a servant in his station is an evangelical work, a serving of the Lord Christ, Coloss. iii. 24.

As to the second position, That good works do not go before but follow justification; it was hardly ever disputed among protestants in the early days of the reformation. The celebrated saying of Augustine was then admitted as an axiom, or undoubted principle, *Bona opera non procedunt justificandum; sed sequuntur justificatum.* Thus in the xvth chapter of the Helvetian Confession we have these words: "Our love and "works cannot please God, if they are done by us, "whilst we are unjust: therefore it is necessary that "we be just *before* we can love or do good works. But "we are made just or we are justified through faith in "Christ, freely by the grace of God, not imputing our "sins to us, but the righteousness of Christ." The members of the Synod of Dort, in the xxivth article of their confession, say: "We are justified by faith in "Christ; and that *before* we do good works: otherwise they could not be good works,—any more than "the fruit of a tree can be good, before the tree itself "be good." "Good works," says the Westminster Confession, "are *fruits* and evidences of a true and "lively faith.—The persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted "in him." The truth of this position is evident to every reader of the Bible, who is not grossly blinded by prejudice. It is evident, in the first place, from the necessity of our being dead to the law or covenant of works in order to our living to God, Rom. vii. 4. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

Now there are no good works, but what are included in bringing forth fruit unto God. But our spiritual marriage to Christ is necessary to our bringing forth fruit unto God; in which marriage to Christ we are dead to the law through his body: that is, we are justified or delivered from the law as a covenant through the righteousness which he wrought out in our nature, received by faith. Before this blessed change of state, the only fruit we bring forth is fruit unto death, v. 5. and the only religious service we attain, is that selfish, slavish, mercenary, carnal service, to which we are prompted by the terrors of the law and the pride of self-righteousness, and which is called, in v. 6. *serving in the oldness of the letter.*

The same thing is evident from Rom. vi. 14. *Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* From this text we learn, that while persons under the law, that is, while they are not brought into a justified state, they are under the dominion of sin; and therefore are utterly incapable of performing any work which is spiritually good or pleasing to God. For, according to this text, freedom from the dominion of sin is the peculiar privilege of those who are *not under the law, but under grace;* that is of those who are justified freely by the grace of God in Christ. Farther, we observe, that, according to the order of the covenant of grace, God's acceptance of our persons is, in the order of nature, before the acceptance of our works. We have an example of this order in Gen. iv. 4. *And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering:* first to Abel, and then to his offering. Thus, it appears, that there are none of our works that are accepted with God, before our persons are accepted with him in justification: and consequently that none of them

done before our attainment of that privilege, are spiritually good. In fine, the apostle intimates that, before justification, men are ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. *But to him who worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

But, says Mr. Bellamy, "you quite misunderstand "Paul, whose real meaning is no more than this; That "it is impossible, that a sinner ever should be justified under any other notion, than as being ungodly, "Rom. iv. 5. For one sin in the eye of the law, and "so in the eye of God the judge, denominates a man "ungodly, and subjects him to eternal damnation, Gal. iii. 10.*"

Answer. It is readily granted, that one sin subjects a person out of Christ to the curse of the broken law; and that all the holiness attainable by believers is of no avail for their justification. This we allow to be included in the meaning of the apostle's expression; but is far from being adequate to the whole import of it; for in order to cut off all pretence for allowing works any place or influence whatever in the affair of a sinner's justification, he teaches, that when God comes to justify a sinner, he finds not only that he has no *such* holiness and good works as are sufficient for the purpose of justification; but also that he has none at all. The person whom God is here said to justify,

* Essay on the nature, &c. page 119, 68. where Mr. Bellamy adds, "Nor can any future penitency make any imaginable "satisfaction." It is strange, if he meant hereby to insinuate, that, when his opponents insist upon repentance as a fruit and evidence of justifying faith, they had said any thing that might lead persons to consider it as a satisfaction for sin. By teaching that true repentance comes after a sure interest in the satisfaction of Christ and complete pardon, they took the most effectual method in the world to prevent such an abuse of repentance.

is *one who worketh not*; that is, who has not, as yet, done any work, that is accepted, as such, with God; his faith not being, as yet, accounted a work, but rather opposed to all works: and to set this matter in the strongest light, the apostle adds, *God justifieth the ungodly.** To say, that the most holy persons may be denominated *ungodly*, merely because they do not good works with a view to justification, is not that *sound speech that cannot be condemned.* The glorified saints are made perfect in holiness. Yet they do nothing with a view to their justification before God; the justification which they obtained on earth, being complete and irrevocable. But who will venture on that account to call them ungodly? Besides, it can never be shewn, that unbelievers, or such as are not yet in a justified state, ever do any work or seek any good qualification with any better view, than that of thereby obtaining acceptance with God.†

* This view of the text, under consideration, is the most suitable to the apostle's design, which is, to guard the doctrine of justification by the free grace of God in Christ against the corruptions of legal teachers. For though men's good works and qualifications be ever so positively excluded from belonging to that which constitutes our justifying righteousness; yet while they are contended for as conditions or prerequisites, or as any other than fruits of our justification, there is a dangerous departure from the simplicity of gospel doctrine.

† We may add here the judgment of two eminent writers on this text. "Who can deny, that the ungodly is said by "Paul to be justified, because he had been ungodly; and in "the very act of justification could be considered no otherwise "in himself? With his justification he is indeed endowed with "the grace of God, whereby he shall afterwards live godly: "but this is done neither before nor in the act of justification; "for God absolves a man without works or previous piety." Hoorobeeku Socinianismus confutatus. "God *justifieth the* "*ungodly*, that is, one who is such in himself, and was *actually* "*such*, till, in regeneration, he is endowed with that faith by "which he is justified." WITSIUS.

Though the position now under consideration, "That good works do not precede, but follow justifica- "tion," be a leading doctrine of the Protestant religion in opposition to Popery, and though it be plainly founded in the passages of scripture now produced; yet it has been represented as erroneous by Mr. Bellamy and others who profess to hold Calvinistic principles. "The freeness of justification," say they, "does "not depend upon the date of it. Holiness may pre- "cede justification, as to time, and yet have no casual "influence on it. On the other hand, it may follow "justification, as to time, and yet may be that which "is accounted for righteousness. The righteousness "of Christ was imputed to Old Testament believers "long before it was actually wrought. Faith works "by love from its first existence, and its thus working "belongs to it as genuine justifying faith. Hence it "is inferred that faith justifies as thus working. To "allege that the property of working by love does not "belong to the nature of faith as justifying, is to con- "tradict the apostle, who speaks of receiving the love "of the truth, that we may be saved, and pronounceth "those persons unbelievers, who do not thus receive it. "Abraham at the time when he is said to have be- "lieved God, and it was counted to him for righteous- "ness; and David, when the blessedness of which "the apostle speaks came upon him, were not in a "state of enmity to God; but had been his friends "and servants for a series of years. The self-abase- "ment of the publican preceded his going down to "his house justified; yet it was not on this ground "that his justification rested."

Answer. The scripture appears to lay much stress upon the date of our reconciliation and justification by

the blood of Christ, as serving eminently to illustrate the freeness of the grace of God in the bestowing of these benefits. *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousnes, when he was in uncircumcision.* As it appeared, that circumcision was no cause or federal condition of Abraham's justification; because he was justified before he was circumcised: so it appears, that our good works are no cause or federal condition of justification; because we are justified, before any of our works are good and acceptable to God.

It seems a strange assertion, that holiness may precede justification as to time, and yet have no casual influence on it; since any active obedience of the creature, which we know to have been acceptable to God, either had a casual influence on justification, or justification had a casual influence on it. The former would have been the case with Adam's obedience, (if he had not fallen) according to the covenant of works; the latter is the case with the obedience of believers according to the covenant of grace. Nor does it seem less strange, to assert, that the holiness or active obedience of the creature may follow justification as to time; and yet may be that which is accounted the creature's justifying righteousness. For, it cannot be shewn, that the righteousness of any mere man could justify him in the sight of God, before it was performed. The justification of a person by his own righteousness is the natural effect of his performance of that righteousness; and therefore to suppose him to be justified by that righteousnes before the performance of it, is to suppose (what is absurd) that a natural effect may exist before its necessary cause. A legalist is so

far blinded by his spiritual pride as to think, that he either has already attained or may attain a righteousness of his own sufficient for his justification; but his natural reason and conscience will not allow him to conclude himself justified by a righteousness not yet performed. Hence Papists, Arminians and other legalists, very consistently, deny, that an infallible assurance of our own justification is attainable in this life. But justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ is a quite different case. For the righteousness of Christ is of infinite value, he being God as well as man; and the imputation of it is made by a special appointment of the free and sovereign grace of God. Hence the efficacy of the righteousness of Christ is not to be measured by the natural efficacy of the righteousness of a mere man: and therefore we may well conceive it to have been sufficient for the justification of his people long before it was actually wrought; as well as it has been since.

We are far from doubting, that it is the property of saving or justifying faith to work by love and to receive the love of the truth. But we say, in the first place, that faith does not justify the sinner as working by love; but as receiving and applying the justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus, set forth in the gospel. A thing may have several properties besides that by which it produces a certain effect. A person is enriched by a ring which he finds; but it is not by the circular figure of the ring, nor by the value of the ring itself, but by a precious gem inclosed in it. In the next place, we deny, that faith is considered and accepted of God as our work before justification. For, in the matter of justification, faith is not considered as a work at all; but only as a mean or instrument, by

which we receive the gift of righteousness. Thus we come to have acceptance with God; first the acceptance of our persons; then, that of our faith as a work; and, lastly, that of our other works or services flowing from faith.

It is a dangerous departure from sound doctrine to teach, "that Abraham and David were not in a state "of enmity to God, but were his friends and servants "for a series of years, before they were in a justified "state." For, though we allow, that regeneration is before justification in the order of nature; yet there can be no moment of time between the one and the other; justifying faith being wrought in us by regeneration. Whoever, therefore, is not in a state of enmity against God, is in a justified state; nor are any other than justified persons, to be reckoned amongst the friends of God. If it be insisted on, that, in Gen. xv. 6. "it is said, *Abraham believed in the Lord, and he* "*counted it to him for righteousness*, and, in the xxxii. "Psalm, David has these words, *I said, I will confess* "*my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest* "*the iniquity of my sin;* and that these patriarchs were "friends and servants of God long before the time to "which these expressions refer, that is, before their "justification:"—We answer, that this is justly denied; for there is sufficient ground to believe that these patriarchs were in a justified state before that time. With regard to Abraham, we are assured by the apostle, that he had faith, and consequently was in a justified state, when he was *called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance*,* that is, several years before the vision recorded in Gen. xv. With regard to David's experience recorded in

* Heb. xi. 8.

the xxxii. Psalm, we may observe, with *Mollevus* on these words, *I said, I will confess my transgression*, that "this resolution includes or supposes faith; for no one "will be brought to this language, till he believes that "God freely forgiveth his sins.*" Hence we are to understand *the forgiving of the iniquity of* David's *sin* in that passage, not of the Lord's bringing him into a justified state, but of a new intimation or application of the pardon formerly granted, according to the case about which he was now exercised. So we may understand such passages as the following, 2 Sam. xii. 13. *Nathan said unto David, The Lord hath put away thy sin.* Isai. vi. 7. *Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.* 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Besides, in the language of scripture a thing is often said to be or to take place, when the manifestation of it is meant,† Rom. iii. 26. *That he might be just;* that is, manifested to be so. In the same manner we understand John xv. 8. *So shall ye be my disciples.* Matth. v. 45. *That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven.* Thus Abraham, David, and indeed any believer, might be said to be justified or pardoned upon a particular manifestation of their justified state; though they had been in that state long before. And though the persons, thus favoured, be now godly; yet as they were ungodly when God brought them into that state; and as there is only one justification, namely, that which took place, when the Lord brought them first to believe

* Mollevus in Psalmas apud Polum.

† Verba quæ *fieri, esse*, vel *agere quid* significant quandoque non tam essentiam vel actum, quam ejusdem notificationem, qualiscunque illa sit, denotant. Glassius de Verbo.

in Christ, while they were without good works or previous piety; so their justification may still be called, (what it was first) the justification of the ungodly.

In the sense now mentioned we may well understand the word *justified* in our Lord's expression concerning the publican, *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other*, Luke xviii. 14. As also in 1 Tim. iii. 16. Jam. ii. 21. The self-abasement of the publican, as it served to manifest his justification before God, supposed that he was already in that state.

In a word, from the general truth, that good works do not go before justification, we conclude, that the exercise of evangelical repentance, which is eminently a good work, does not go before that privilege, but follows it.

II. The exercise of evangelical repentance is not before justification in the sight of God; because it is not before justifying faith.

In the first place it appears, that, if evangelical repentance be not before justifying faith, it is not before justification: For faith and justification before God are so immediately connected, that no other grace or holy exercise can be considered as coming between them. Whereas if repentance were in the order of nature after faith, and yet before justification, then repentance would come in between faith and justification: then it might be said, in opposition to the apostle, that we are justified by repentance rather than by faith; as in that case the former would be more immediately connected with justification than the latter. All this is exceedingly absurd; since our justifi-

cation is an act complete at once, in the first moment of believing in Christ as the Lord our righteousness.*

In the next place, evangelical repentance, as it is distinguished from justifying faith, comes after it in the order of nature. We say, repentance, as it is

* God's eternal and unchangeable will to justify the elect, upon the account of a righteousness wrought out by Christ and imputed to them, has been called by judicious divines *active justification. Nota est distinctio,* says Witsius, *inter justificationem activam et passivam. Illa est sententia Dei, qua sibi per Christum satisfactum profitetur, omnesque electos a reatu et solvendi debito immunes pronuntiat, etiam ante ipsorum fidem, hactenus ut ab ipsis nullam unquam solutionem exacturus sit.* &c. Oeconomia Fœd. Lib. ii. Cap. 7. Justification, considered as an immanent act of God, is called *active:* but, considered as terminating upon us, is called *passive.* The active justification of the elect was displayed in the resurrection of Christ: For, in raising Christ from the dead, God, as a righteous Judge, declared his acceptance of Christ's obedience unto death as the full payment of the elect's debt, Isai. liii. 11. Rom. iv. 25. Heb. ix. 26, 28. In virtue of this active justification, there is a special providence exercised about the elect, whilst in an unregenerate state, in subservience to their conversion. In virtue of this justification, the unconverted elect, though they are still lying under actual guilt, under the condemnatory sentence of the law, are secured against the actual execution of it. In virtue of this justification, the Holy Spirit enters into the dead soul and quickens it in the moment of regeneration. This, however, is not the justification, which is mentioned in scripture as the privilege of believers, which is in the order of nature after effectual calling, Rom. viii. 30. which is not only manifested, but actually brought to pass by faith as a mean or instrument, Rom. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. iii. 8, 24. By faith a man's relation to the law is changed, not in the decree of God, but in his actual condition as standing before the tribunal of God: for, before faith, as to the actual state of his person, he stood at the bar of God under a sentence of condemnation: but, upon faith's producing the plea of Christ's righteousness on his behalf, he stands at that bar acquitted and accepted as righteous. Before faith, the law covenant was alive to us as our old husband, subjecting us to condemnation and death. But by faith apprehending Christ as the Lord our righteousness, the law comes in that respect, to be dead to us and we to it: because, upon our believing, we are espoused to Christ; and

distinguished from faith, according to Acts xx. 21. *Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is true, that the word repentance does, in scripture, sometimes express the whole of that change which takes place in the conversion of a sinner unto God.

the law-covenant, as such, having got a full answer to all its demands from our new husband, has nothing to require of us. It is true, that the elect were in Christ as their representing Head from eternity, 2 Tim. i. 9. and this in-being in him is the ground of the active justification beforementioned. But there is another in-being in Christ, upon which their actual or passive justification proceeds; an in-being in him which takes place in the first moment of believing, John vi. 56. and with regard to which Paul says of some of his fellow-prisoners, that they *were in Christ before him*, Rom. xvi. 7. The actual condemnation of a person, on account of Adam's first sin, supposes not only that he was represented by Adam in the covenant of works; but also, that he actually exists as one of Adam's natural descendants. So our actual justification on account of the righteousness of Christ supposes not only, that we were represented by Christ in the covenant of grace; but also that we actually exist in him as his spiritual seed. But we do not actually exist in him, as such, till we believe.

The opinion of those who assert that men are actually justified from all eternity is justly condemned by our Confession of Faith, by the author of the Marrow of Modern Divinity, and others, as an Antinomian delusion. It is indeed an opinion which subverts the scriptural order of things; according to which order we are under the law before we are under grace. We are branches in the old stock of the first Adam, before we are ingrafted branches in the true vine, Christ Jesus. We are constituted sinners by the disobedience of the old covenant-head; before we are constituted righteous by the obedience of our new covenant-head. We are called, before we are justified. That the scriptural order in all these instances is reversed by this preposterous opinion of eternal justification, is too evident to need any illustration. This opinion, as Mr. Boston, in the second of his Miscellany Questions, observes, "overturns both "law and gospel at one blow": *the law*, which represents us as at first and by nature children of wrath, under condemnation, and consequently unpardoned: *the gospel*, which presents pardon to us, as being before we believe law-condemned criminals; and the garment of Christ's righteousness as what we are destitute of, till we receive it or put it on by faith. It is parti-

In this sense, it comprehends faith in Jesus Christ, sorrow for sin and sincere endeavours after new obedience. It would be improper to say of repentance in this sense, that it is after faith in Christ. But then it still remains true, that repentance, taken in a stricter sense, as signifying godly sorrow for sin and sincere endeavours after new obedience, is distinct from faith and comes after it in the order of nature. And though in this sense, repentance is implied in faith, as an effect is implied in its cause; yet there is no ground for the following exception of Mr. Bellamy: "Repentance is "implied in faith; and therefore it is not after faith "in the order of nature†." The fruit of a tree may be said to have been always seminally, or as to the principles of it, in the tree; yet nobody, on that account, will scruple to say, that the fruit is after the tree in the order of nature.

Were repentance before faith, sinners might go to God, without making use of Christ as the only way to him,—in direct opposition to the testimony of Christ concerning himself: *I am the way :—no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* To suppose that we may exercise true repentance before faith in Christ, is contrary to all those scriptures that inculcate the necessity of faith, in order to our living, standing, or walking in

cularly a great error to hold that justification by faith alone is only a manifestative justification: thus confounding it, as the Papists do, with that justification by works which is treated of in James ii. 21—24. a justification, which Protestant divines have always held to be manifestative in contradistinction to justification before God, which is by faith only, Rom. iii. 28. v 1. The writer of these letters concurs heartily with the brethren of the Associate Reformed Synod in testifying against the doctrine of eternal justification, according to their act published in the year 1798.

† Essay on the Nature, &c. p. 15.

a spiritual sense; or in order to our pleasing God in any exercise, Gal. ii. 20. 2 Corinth. i. 24. v. 7. Heb. xi. 6. John xv. 4, 5. Various passages of scripture, such as Joel. ii. 12, 13. Hose. xiv. 1, 2. Jerem. iii. 14, 22. Isai. lv. 7. propose the exceeding riches of the grace of God in Christ in order to excite us to repentance. But if repentance go before faith, such passages tend to deceive us. For we are led, by the most natural construction of these texts, to believe, that it is by means of a previous, believing apprehension of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, that sinners are brought to a heart-hatred and total renunciation of sin. The doctrine of the necessity of true repentance before faith in Christ, has a manifest tendency, either to deter the awakened and convicted sinner from essaying the exercise of coming to Christ, as being sensible of his want of repentance; or to encourage the secure and self-conceited legalist to bring his pretended repentance as a price in his hand. The truth is, evangelical repentance is not otherwise to be obtained, than by looking on him whom we have pierced, according to that remarkable promise, Zech. xii. 10. and by receiving it from him who is exalted to give it, Act. v. 31.

It is true, that repentance is mentioned before faith in some places of Scripture, as in the text last quoted, in Act. xx. 21. in Mark i. 15. But things are not always mentioned in scripture according to the order of nature. Thus it is not according to that order that in the apostolick benediction, 1 Corinth. xiii. 13. the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is put before the love of the Father; and that in 2 Pet. i. 10. the calling of believers is put before their election. So in the passages wherein repentance is mentioned before faith, what is

intended is not to point out the order of nature; but rather first to propose repentance as the end; and then faith as the mean necessary for the attainment of that end.

We conclude, that as repentance is after faith in Christ, so it is after the pardon of sin, which is received by faith.

III. The exercise of evangelical repentace is not before justification in the sight of God; because it is not before the exercise of love to God.

Here two things are to be proved: one is, that repentance springs from love to God: the other, that love to God follows a state of forgiveness. The truth of both these propositions appears from the example of the penitent woman recorded in Luke vii. 37—48. As to the first of these propositions, our Lord, whose judgment is always according to truth, put this construction upon her tears of sorrow for her many sins, that they flowed from true love. No other sorrow for sin or hatred of it belongs to true repentance, than such as proceeds from love to God. As to the other proposition, which is, that love to God follows a state of forgiveness, it appears from our Lord's parable of the two debtors. For, by that parable, he shews, that, as an effect is still according to its cause, so our love to God will be according to the forgiveness of our sins apprehended by faith. In this sense we are to understand what our Lord says to the Pharisee concerning the woman; *I say unto thee her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.* The particle *for* does not always denote the cause of a thing, but sometimes

the effect and evidence of it*; as when we say, the spring is come; for the trees begin to bud. So in John xvi. 27. *The Father himself loveth you; for ye have loved me;* that is, your love to me is a certain evidence that the Father loveth you. Our Lord's argument here is evidently to this purpose: the person that is forgiven most will love most; but this poor woman, and not Simon the Pharisee, loves most: and therefore she is the person that is forgiven most. Her love is a sufficient proof, that her sins, however many, are all forgiven. With regard to the mean by which this woman attained the forgiveness of her sins, our Lord shews us what it was, when he says to her, *thy faith hath saved thee; thy faith*, not thy repentance or thy tears. "From the fruits of love," says Chemnitius upon the place, "our Lord shews, that the sins of this "woman were forgiven. When he had said, "*Her sins* "*are forgiven; for she loved much;* he immediately "adds, (to prevent the mistake of his meaning with "regard to the order of cause and effect,) *But to whom* "*little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* He declares "again and again, that remission of sin goes before, "and that love follows. Having said, *The creditor* "*frankly forgave them both*, he adds, *Which of them will* "*love him most*? Here it is observable, that the expres- "sion, *will love him*, is in the future tense, whereas the "expression, *he forgave them*, is in the preterite or the "past;—intimating that a person's love to God follows "the remission of sins, as the future follows the past."

* The Greek particle rendered *for* denotes the proof of a thing, which, as Amesius observes, "is taken from the follow- "ing effect, as well as from the antecedent cause. That the "woman's love," adds he, "is here pointed out as the effect "of the pardon of her sins, is evident from the whole dis- "course:" Bellarminus Enervatus.

"Here," adds that evangelical writer, "Christ shews us "whence true love to him springs. As long as insol- "vent debtors consider their creditor in no other light "than that of a rigid exacter of his due, though they "may sometimes flatter him with their mouths, they "will never sincerely love him, they will hate and des- "pise him in their hearts. Thus poor souls, that are "ignorant of any way of pardon and reconciliation, on "which they can rely with certainty, despise God, or "hate and shun him, as an incensed adversary. Hence "it is that, unless the gospel, which proclaims a free "grant of the forgiveness of sins, be received by faith, "the true love of God can neither enter into, nor abide "in any soul."

But, says Mr. Bellamy, "though repentance is "always increased by a sense of the Divine forgive- "ness, the latter does not therefore at first go before "the former*."

Answer. We do not say, that a person has no true gospel-repentance, till he attain a distinct sense of his being already in a justified state: the influence of pardoning mercy apprehended by faith, will produce real love to God and gospel repentance, not indeed before the person has been brought into a justified state, but before he has attained a distinct and comfortable sense of it. Thus the woman's repentance, just now mentioned, which followed the Divine forgiveness of sin, (as we have seen from the application of the parable of the two debtors to her case:) was before the distinct and comfortable sense of that forgiveness arising from our Lord's intimation of it in v. 48. *And he*

* Essay on the Nature, &c. page 117.

said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. In this exception, therefore, Mr. Bellamy commits what is called *Ignoratio Elenchi*, that is, a mistake of the matter in question: for the question is not, whether repentance goes before the sense of forgiveness? but whether it goes before forgiveness itself? Or if we understand him as meaning (what he must mean if he oppose the doctrine of Mr. Marshal and Mr. Boston) that there is a repentance that goes before forgiveness; then it must be either of the same kind with that which follows forgiveness, or of a different kind. If it be of a different kind, then is it not that gospel repentance, which is of a gracious nature and acceptable to God in Christ: the only repentance of which we now enquire. But if it be supposed to be of the same kind, the falsehood of the supposition has been already shewn; for we have seen, that, before justification by faith in Jesus Christ, men are destitute of that love to God which is essential to gospel-repentance, and which is an effect and evidence of the pardon of sin.

IV. This doctrine, that a state of pardon goes before the exercise of true repentance, is most agreeable to the order according to which God hath promised to bestow these blessings upon his people. Hosea xiv. 4. *I will heal their backslidings:* v. 6. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols.* Isai. xliv. 22. *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.* Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. *I will establish my covenant with thee; that thou mayst remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame; because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* xxxvi. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water,* that is, the blood of Christ,

upon you, for the remission of sins, *and ye shall be clean*, judicially purged or absolved from every charge of guilt*. Ver. 26. *A new heart will I give you.* Ver. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* Ver. 31. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and loathe yourselves for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

The argument from these passages is not merely, that a justified state is mentioned before repentance; but that the latter is mentioned as the native effect of the former. Ephraim's resolution to have no more to do with idols is the native effect of the healing of his backslidings. The Lord's grace manifested towards Israel in his being *pacified towards them for all that they have done*, fills them with ingenuous shame and self-loathing. That there is another sort of repentance going before pardon and proceeding from legal convictions and the dread of the Divine judgments is not to be doubted; but that there is any exercise of repentance of a gracious nature or acceptable to God different from that godly sorrow and self-loathing which the Lord secures to his people in these promises, has never been proved.

V. The opinion of the necessity of repentance in order to the receiving of pardon tends to frustrate the manifestation of Divine grace in the gospel-offer. The gospel promises pardon immediatly to those that believe, Act. x. 43. *Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* But, says Mr.

* It is proper to understand this verse of justification, as being a privilege distinct from regeneration and sanctification, which are promised in the two following verses. So this passage is understood by Polanus and Junius. See Pool's Synopsis.

Bellamy, he shall not receive that blessing from the Lord, till he first get the exercise of true repentance. But how is he to get repentance? he has it not of himself. And while he views himself as still excluded from the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, he has not the least ground to expect, that God will give him repentance*. The opinion, in question, tends to the subversion of the gospel in two respects.

1st. The gospel teaches men to come empty handed to the market of free grace for the remission of sins and all other blessings included in eternal life. But he comes not empty-handed, who brings repentance along with him. If it be said, that faith is still something that we are to bring with us, we must repeat what we formerly observed, that, in the matter of justification, faith is not considered as a work or inherent righteousness, but only as our receiving of *the gift of righteousness*. Therefore *it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed.* Repentance is very different in this respect; for there is no grace of the Spirit, which hath more of the nature of giving than repentance; as it is the turning of the whole man from sin unto God; and therefore, there is nothing which we should be farther from allowing any place among the means of our justification before God. The abettors of the opinion in question, have need to consider, whether, instead of the covenant of grace, they are not taking up with a sort of covenant of works; the tenor of which is, do this;

* "Let them that will," says that judicious and godly divine Mr. Boston, "repent that Christ may do for them; I shall "desire always to believe what Christ hath done for me, that I "may repent; not doubting that the being instructed therein "is the plain way to smiting on the thigh, and saying, *What "have I done?*"

turn from sin unto God sincerely, though thou canst not do so perfectly,—and thou shalt live in the favour of God. This plan is manifestly of the same nature with the covenant of works; while doing in both is the previous condition of acceptance with God: the difference between the doing in the one and the doing in the other with regard to the *degree* of perfection, makes no difference in the *nature* of the two plans. The one is evidently a covenant of works as well as the other.

2dly, The gospel warrants any sinner of mankind to embrace the offer or free grant, which it makes, of pardon in Christ, immediately upon hearing and understanding the import of it: but, according to Mr. Bellamy's doctrine on this head, no person can find a warrant for doing so, till he be conscious to himself, that he has attained true repentance. It is laid down by the apostle as an established principle, that *whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*, Rom. xiv. 25. that is, if we do any thing, while we doubt in our conscience, whether it be agreeable to the will of God or not, it is sin. The context makes it evident, that the apostle speaks there of the faith of God's command. Supposing, then, that a person believes the pardon of sin to be offered in the gospel to none but the truly penitent, and supposing, that he doubts of himself, whether he be such a one or not, he cannot, in that case, without sin embrace the offered pardon: to him it is forbidden fruit. Nay, before he lay hold of it, his conscience must be satisfied, that his repentance is not legal but evangelical; and that it has all the characters which distinguish repentance unto life from that which may be found in unrenewed men. How can this consist with the gospel, which declares, that whosoever will is welcome to *receive the water of life freely?*

If any should attempt to retort this argument, and say, that, whilst we hold faith to be the only mean of receiving pardon, assurance of the reality of our faith must be as necessary in order to the embracing of the gospel-offer, according to our doctrine, as assurance of the truth of our repentance, on Mr. Bellamy's scheme: we answer by observing, that there is a great difference between the priority of repentance to pardon held by Mr. Bellamy, and what we hold concerning faith as a mean of receiving pardon. In the former case, repentance is required as a previous qualification distinct from the embracing of the gospel-offer of pardon; and therefore it must be sinful for a person to attempt to lay hold of this offer, till he knows, that he has attained that qualification. But in the latter case, faith is not a qualification previously required in order to the embracing of the offer of pardon, but is itself the very act of embracing that offer; it is a receiving of pardon, as it is a receiving of Christ, exhibited in the gospel-offer. Here the previous consciousness, that we have believed, cannot be held necessary in order to the receiving of pardon; unless we would be so absurd as to say, that the consciousness of our having already received a thing, is necessary in order to our act of receiving it.

Such are the arguments from which we conclude that a justified state precedes the exercise of gospel-repentance. As to the objections which have been made to this doctrine, one of the principal of them is, that there are several texts in which repentance is put before the forgiveness of sin, such as, Luke iii. 3. xxiv. 48. Acts v. 31. But with regard to these texts, it may be useful to recollect what was observed concerning the mention of repentance in some texts before faith, namely, that the order, in which things are mentioned

in scripture, is not always the order of nature. Besides, repentance or turning from sin unto God, being as to the general nature of it, a duty required by the dictates of reason and conscience, may well be first preached to sinners in order to convince them of the necessity of it, and of their natural inability to attain it; and then will properly follow the doctrine of our free forgiveness with God in Christ; the faith of which is the only means of attaining that repentance. In this sense, repentance might, no doubt, be preached by John the Baptist and the apostles before the gospel-doctrine of forgiveness. Farther, the term repentance appears to be used for the relinquishing of false opinions. Thus, when John exhorted his hearers to repent, he may be understood as calling them to renounce the error of the Saducees about the resurrection; and that of the Pharisees about a temporal Messiah and about justification before God by their own works. So the word *repent* may be understood in Acts iii. 19. where Peter, having told the Jews, that they had crucified him whom God had now glorified, shews them how they came to do so, ver. 17. *Through ignorance ye did it.* Therefore in ver. 18. he corrects their mistake, telling them that, according to the writings of the prophets, the Messiah was to suffer the very things which they had inflicted on Jesus of Nazareth. Hence he exhorts them, in v. 19. to change their mind, to renounce the dangerous error, they had fallen into, with regard to the Messiah, and to turn to the Lord in the way of embracing the gospel of his grace*. In fine, repen-

* It is a reason for not understanding the word *repent* here of gospel-repentance, that such repentance is included in the import of the next expression, *be converted:* But though it were granted, that the word *repent* here may be understood of gospel-repentance; yet this passage will not answer the purpose of proving repentance to be the previous condition or means of the

tance is put for the whole of a sinner's conversion unto God, including both faith and godly sorrow for sin, as in Act. xi. 18. *To the Gentiles hath God granted repentance unto life.* In this sense, repentance may be said to be both before and after the acts of justification: before it, in respect of faith receiving Christ as the Lord our righteousness: after it, in respect of the exercise of godly sorrow for sin.

"John," says Calvin on Luke iii. 3. "first declares "that the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and having "thus proposed the grace of God to his hearers, he "thence exhorts them to repent. Hence it appears, that "the mercy of God by which he restores the lost, is the "ground upon which repentance proceeds. In this "sense, Mark and Luke say that John *preached the bap-*"*tism of repentance for the remission of sins;* not to inti-"mate, as some ignorantly suppose, that repentance is "the cause of the remission of sins; but to teach us, that "as the free love of God is first in embracing poor sin-"ners, not imputing their sins unto them so this par-

attainment of a pardoned state. For *the blotting out of sin* here may signify, not the act of God in bringing us into that state; but the manifestation of it. For, as was formerly observed, a thing is often said in Scripture to be done or to take place, when it is manifested. By *the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*, Calvin, Bezu and other judicious commentators understand the day of judgment, when believers shall be refreshed by the most public and glorious declaration of their pardoned state; the time here referred to being the time of the restitution of all things, when Christ shall be sent from heaven, ver. 20, 21. It is plain, that the apostle's teaching, that repentance is before the glorious manifestation, of pardon at the last day, is no proof that repentance goes before pardon itself. Hence appears the impertinence of Mr. Bellamy's exception, which is, "that whatsoever entitles a person to pardon, "according to the gospel now, will entitle to pardon at the last "day." We only observe that to speak of repentance entitling to pardon, savours more of the Popish, than of the Protestant religion.

" don of sins, is granted us in Christ,—not that God " may indulge us in our sins, but that he may heal us " and deliver us from them." " The baptism of repen- " tance," says Piscator on the same place, " means, " that this ordinance was used to testify and profess re- " pentance. The words *for the remission of sins* depend " immediately, not on the word *preached* nor on the " word *repentance*, but on the word *baptism*; and the im- " port of the expression is, that baptism serves to signify " and seal the remission of sins." Piscator has a simi- lar observation on Act. ii. 38. another text commonly adduced by those who plead for the priority of repen- tance to a pardoned state. " Here," says that useful commentator, " the words for the remission of sins, do " not depend upon the word *repent*, but upon the word " *baptised*;" the sense of the exhortation being, that these convinced persons should repent, that is, should turn to God by faith and repentance; and should receive bap- tism, not as a means of obtaining the remission of sins, but a testimony of their receiving that and all other spi- ritual blessings in Christ by means of faith in him. It is evident from the connexion signified by the causal par- ticle *for* in ver. 39. that the apostle there lays down the promise of pardon and salvation as the ground upon which he calls them to repent: as if he had said; I ex- hort you to repent; and in order that you may do so tru- ly and acceptably, believe that *the promise is to you.*

Another text, which has been supposed to countenance the priority of true repentance to a pardoned state, is Acts xxvi. 18. Here our Lord shews first, how he works faith in the hearts of sinners by means of the gospel, namely, by *opening the eyes of the blind, and turning them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.* And then he declares, that, by means of

faith, thus wrought, they *receive forgiveness of sin and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith which is in him.* If it be said, that the expression, *turning them from the power of Satan to God* may signify the exercise of gospel repentance: we answer, that, as these words, *turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God*, evidently describe the work of God by means of the gospel; so they are to be understood of that saving change, which is called regeneration, and which in other places is ascribed to the gospel as the mean of it, 1 Pet. i. 23. Jam. i. 10. Hence these words, as they stand connected in this passage, cannot be understood of evangelical repentance as it is our act or exercise*. But the following expression *that they may receive*, may be connected with the words at the end of the verse, *by faith that is in me;* and may well me understood of our act of receiving by faith, which is inseparably attained with the exercise of gospel repentance. Thus, the words of Christ in this passage serve much to confirm our doctrine, as they represent our receiving the forgiveness of sins, and not the exercise of gospel repentance, as the most immediate effect of regeneration. If we take the words *by faith that is in me* to be immediately connected with the word *sanctified*, we have a farther confirmation of our doctrine; for thus the faith of forgiveness through Christ is declared to be the means of our sanctification. But if that faith be the means of our sanctification, it is also the means of our

* The first expression, *to open the eyes of the blind*, is used to describe the work and office of our Lord Jesus, Isai. xlii. 7. But it is no where said to be our act. The next expression, *to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan* to God, is parallel to *bringing out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house;* a work which is also ascribed to the Lord Christ in the same place: but no where in scripture to the creature.

repentance: for repentance is certainly included in sanctification: what is the means of the one is the means of the other: and therefore that faith must be before the exercise of gospel repentance, as the means are, in the order of nature, before the end.

But, say the advocates for Mr. Bellamy's opinion, there are many other texts which prove a gracious saving repentance to be before the forgiveness of sin, such as Luke xiii. 3, 5. *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.* Prov. xxviii. 13. *He that covereth his sin shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy.* To the same purpose they quote Jerem. iv. 1, 3, 4. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Isai. lv. 7.

Answer. None could be more express and peremptory, than Mr. Boston and others whom Mr. Bellamy censures with such peculiar severity, in declaring that there is no pardon or salvation without repentance. But if every thing without which, according to the scriptures, men shall perish, must go before a justified state, as among the means of attaining it, then a holy life and perseverance therein unto death, must go before a justified state; and then it will follow, that a justified state in the sight of God is not attainable before death. For the scripture declares, that without holiness and enduring to the end as well as without repentance men will certainly perish, Heb. x. 38. xii. 14*. Where-

* The text in Luke xiii. 3. does not hold forth a connection between repentance and pardon, but only between not repenting and perishing. There is a great difference between these two connections. Let the argument be this, *Except ye repent, ye shall perish.* Therefore if ye do repent, ye shall live. Here, as Mr. Boston observes, "the consequent is true, but the consequence is naught." It is no better reasoning than it would be to say, Because he who does not pray, shall perish; therefore he, who prays, shall be saved. To this purpose is Calvin's answer to the Papists, when they allege, that men must be jus-

as it has been usually taught by Protestant divines, that the justification of a sinner, as soon as he truly believes in him whose name is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, is complete; or as the apostle expresses it, *All that believe are justified from all things*, Acts xiii. 39. and to such there is no condemnation, Rom. viii. 1.

As to the text quoted from the Proverbs, Mr. Bellamy's opponents teach, as the doctrine of it, that none evidence themselves to be partakers of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, but such as are sincerely exercised in confessing and forsaking their sins. To say that such as are brought to this exercise shall have or receive mercy in the after course of their lives, Psal. xxiii. 6. and at the day of judgment, 2 Tim. i. 18. is perfectly consistent with our maintaining, that the mercy of a pardoned state is in the order of nature, before that exercise. Besides, it may be observed, that the expression in this text may include the confession of open and scandalous sins before men, and the exercise of mercy toward them, and indeed the practice of good works in general, as is evident from the import of forsaking sin, and from parallel texts, Matth. v. 7. Prov. xiv. 21. Thus good works in general will be introduced as previous conditions of our justification before God. If our old reformers had heard such doctrine

tified by their good works, because they are condemned for the want of them. Calvin's Institutions, Book iii. Chap. xviii. sect. 10. The contraries here, says Mr. Calvin, are not equal: for one deviation, however small, from the pure and perfect rule of God's law renders a person unrighteous and liable to eternal death, Jam. ii. 10. But it is not one or a few good works, but an unremitted course of obedience, without any the least defect, that will constitute a person righteous in the sight of God. And it is a maxim with regard to a particular action, That it is not morally good, unless it has all the requisites of a good work; the want of one of them renders it evil.

taught amongst Protestants, would they not have cried out with the apostle, *O foolish people, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?*

With regard to Jerem. iv. 1, 3, 4. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. and other texts which inculcate the duty of repentance, it may be observed, that, in such passages, repentance is either taken in a large sense for the whole of conversion, in which faith in Christ, receiving the forgiveness of sins, as well as repentance strictly taken, is included; or the duty is simply enjoined; while the right manner of performing it, and its connexion with privileges and with other duties, are to be learned by comparing various passages of scripture on the same subject. Such commands are given to a person or people both before justification for conviction and after justification for direction, with declarations of a sure connexion between true repentance and life, (whether by life be meant temporal comfort or eternal blessedness)—in full consistency with the doctrine of Mr. Bellamy's opponents. Nor can any texts serve his purpose but such as would teach that God had either brought persons to the actual exercise of true repentance or had promised to do so, before or without the faith of his pardoning mercy in Christ. For, as we have already shewn, to say, that repentance is before a state of pardon is the same thing with saying, that it is before faith in Jesus Christ. But no such text has been or can be produced.

Another text quoted by Mr. Bellamy is that remarkable one in Isai. lv. 7. *Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him*

Return unto Jehovah and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.* It is evidently the design of this text, to set before the sinners the mercy of God in Christ, that he may first believe it or trust in it for pardon and for heart-turning grace; and then that by that faith or trust, he may exercise true repentance in turning from his wicked way and thoughts. "Here," says Calvin upon the place, "the context is to be carefully attended to: for the "prophet shews, that men must have the previous faith "or confidence of pardon, otherwise they cannot be "brought unto the exercise of repentance.—The doc- "trine of the Popish doctors on the nature of repent- "ance is indeed egregious trifling. But even though "they were to teach the true nature of it, it would still "be unprofitable; whilst they omit what is the foun- "dation of all right exercise of repentance, the doc- "trine of free forgiveness of sin; by which alone true "peace of conscience can ever be attained. And indeed "while the sinner is a stranger to this peace of consci- "ence, and views God only as a judge dragging him "to his tribunal to give an account of his ill-spent life, "he will flee from God, instead of returning to him "with godly fear and filial obedience."

But farther, says Mr. Bellamy, "in token of repent- "ance as what must precede forgiveness, the high "priest under the law was, on the great day of atone- "ment, to lay both his hands on the head of a live goat

* This expression might be rendered, *who will have mercy;* the copulative particle *vau* being frequently put for the relative pronoun, as in Psalm cxviii. 27. *God is the Lord who* &c. or we may read with Dr. Lowth, *For he will have mercy,—for he will pardon.* So this particle must be understood in Gen. xx. 3. and many other places.

" and confess over him all the iniquities of the children
" of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins,
" and thus put them upon the head of the goat to be
" sent away into the wilderness. As this was to be
" done on that solemn occasion with relation to the
" iniquities of the children of Israel in general, so, if
" any particular man at any time committed a sin, he
" was to bring his bullock, and, in token of confession
" and repentance, to lay his hand upon his head, and
" substitute it to die in his room: and if he had not
" only sinned against the great God, but in his sin in-
" jured his neighbour, he must first, as became a true
" penitent, make restitution before the sacrifice was
" offered."

Answer. The act of the persons in the cases now mentioned, in laying their hands upon the head of the devoted victim, was a profession of their faith in Christ Jesus as the true propitiatory sacrifice, and supposed, that they trusted in him for the pardon of all their sins. In this act, supposing it to have been sincere, they were actually in a pardoned state, (this being the case with all true believers;) and therefore as this act was before the public confession of their iniquities, so it evidenced their pardoned state to be before that confession; before restitution, and other tokens of repentance. This is a great confirmation of the doctrine of Mr. Bellamy's opponents about the priority of a pardoned state to the actual exercise of evangelical repentance: and what followed the confession of sins in the offering of the victim, the sprinkling of blood, the sending away of the live goat, was answerable to those intimations and comfortable manifestations of pardon which the good Spirit of God grants in and after the

exercise of gospel repentance, by means of the word, sacraments and prayer.

Again, says Mr. Bellamy, " God declares to the " people of Israel, that after they should become truly " penitent, then he would forgive them, Lev. xxvi. 41, " 42. *If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity " of their fathers: if their uncircumcised heart be hum- " bled, and they then accept the punishment of their ini- " quity;—then will I remember my covenant with Jacob.* " Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 33. where God declares concerning " the Jews in Babylon, that he will first bring them to " repentance, and then restore them to their land. " Solomon, in his prayer, at the dedication of the " temple, expressly and repeatedly holds forth this doc- " trine, that repentance is before forgiveness. One " cannot well see in how strong a point of light this is " set without reading the whole prayer. The temple " was a type of the Son of God incarnate. And in all " their prayers, the penitent Jews looked towards the " holy temple, and then God heard in heaven his dwell- " ing place. *When heaven is shut up, and there is no " rain, because they sinned against thee, if they pray " towards this place and confess thy name, and turn from " their sin, &c. then hear thou in heaven, and forgive,* " &c."

Answer. These passages will not answer Mr. Bellamy's purpose, unless it could be shewn that the forgiveness therein mentioned is necessarily to be understood of that sentence by which God, in the first act of faith, brings a sinner into a justified state; and consequently, that all the exercise that precedes this forgiveness must be without or before faith. But this cannot be proved: for the exercises, that preceded

this forgiveness, such as prayer and confession of sin, plainly implied the true faith of those who were sincerely engaged in those exercises. Nay, looking towards God's holy temple may well be considered as an Old Testament expression equivalent to believing in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as the persons, whose exercise is represented in these passages, had faith in Christ, or were true believers, before the forgiveness there mentioned, it follows, that they were in a justified state before it. Besides, forgiveness, as we observed in the beginning of this letter, sometimes signifies the manifestation of God's favour towards his people in the removal of temporal calamities; and in this sense we are led to understand forgiveness in the passages under consideration, and particularly as respecting the deliverance of the Israelites from a state of captivity. It is true, Mr. Bellamy objects, that forgiveness cannot be so understood here; "because the "penitent believer is exempted from spiritual and "eternal, as well as from outward and temporal evil." But granting the persons spoken of to have been exempted from eternal evil by the sentence of justification before God; it will not follow, that the forgiveness here mentioned is to be understood of that sentence, and not of the removal of temporal strokes; for the removal of temporal strokes may be, and, no doubt, frequently is, to true believers a token of the sentence of their justification, which may have taken place long before. "It is clear," says Mr. Boston, "that in such "passages the people are considered in their national "capacity under national strokes for national sins; "for the removal of which repentance of the same "kind is required. And though, in such a general "repentance of a people, they that believe are spirit-

"ually and theologically serious; and with a removal "of the common calamity from the society, of which "they are members, get God's countenance to shine "on their souls; yet the generality are never evangeli- "cally penitent. But moral seriousness, in such a "case, according to the Lord's way of dealing with "nations, is a mean of getting these temporal strokes "removed, as may be seen in the case of the Ninevites, "and many a time in the case of the Jews. It is gene- "rally allowed, that there is a twofold being under the "covenant of grace; the one external, the other inter- "nal. The same person may be under the covenant "of works and the covenant of grace: under the for- "mer in respect of his soul's state, with God's curse "upon him; under the latter, as externally partaking "of the external privileges, protections, deliverances, "&c. given to the visible church." Thus, God might be said *to remember his covenant* for the afflicted Israelites, when they confessed their sins with self-abasement, and God, at the same time, removed the temporal calamities which they lay under.

But what the opposers of our doctrine chiefly insist on is the supposed tendency of it to detract from the necessity of repentance. This is no other than the old hackneyed objection which has been always made by legal teachers against the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and the solid answers that were given by Paul to the Judaizing party, and by our Reformers to the Papists in that case, are abundantly sufficient in this: such as, that when we receive the death of Christ as the ground of our justification, we receive it as the procuring cause of repentance; that the Holy Spirit works repentance in us at the same time in which he

works that faith by which we receive the righteousness of Christ for our justification; so that, though justification be before repentance in the order of nature, the one cannot be said, at least in the case of adults, to be before the other in the order of time: that no believer can have the comfortable sense or evidence of his pardoned state without the exercise of repentance: that the negligence of believers in not exercising repentance for particular sins particularly, will bring upon them most heavy corrections in the present life: that all who live and die without repentance will inevitably perish: That it is not a genuine repentance or godly sorrow for sin to which the pardoning mercy of God and the love of Christ, apprehended by faith, are not constraining motives.

To one who duly considers the vindications of the Protestant doctrine on this head by Calvin and others, it must appear strange how a writer who professes his adherence to that doctrine in general, was led to express himself in the following manner: "If," says he, "the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness "be given up, we shall not be in the practice of urging "it on the unconverted. We shall imagine it will be "leading souls astray to press it before and in order to "believing; and afterwards it will be thought unne-"cessary, as all that is wanted will come of itself." It is astonishing to hear a minister, who is neither a Papist nor an Arminian, insinuate, that he knows not how sinners are to be urged to repentance and other good works, without representing them as necessary in order to justification. Might he not shew them, that, while they continue impenitent and unholy, they evidence themselves to be in a state of condemnation and

in the broad way which leadeth to destruction? Might he not warn them, that impenitence, persisted in, will be their ruin? Might not the necessity of repentance be urged upon sinners as a motive to their believing in Christ; because repentance cannot be attained without believing in him? Nay, is not this the only profitable way of urging sinners to repentance? Is it not preposterous to press upon sinners the necessity of repentance, without pointing out the means by which it may be attained; as it would be to use much discourse with a sick man in order to persuade him to cure himself; while he neither knows himself, nor is shewn by any other, how or by what means he may be cured? Has not this ignorant way of pressing sinners to repentance the most fatal tendency, as it leads them to seek after, and at last take up with, some sort of legal repentance, which fills them with spiritual pride and with such a conceit of their self-righteousness, as, more than all the gross irregularities of which they pretend to have repented, hardens them in their opposition to the gospel of Christ? With regard to the case of believers, the author, for whom the general tenor of his writings leads us to have a particular regard and esteem, is chargeable with great inadvertence at least, in representing the doctrine of all who deny the priority of repentance to justification as rendering it unnecessary to urge believers to the exercise of repentance. Though believers have in them the root and habit of repentance and of other graces; yet they need to be stirred up to the exercise thereof by means of the warnings and exhortations of the word. These are peculiarly necessary in the case of repentance on account of the powerful and subtle workings of indwelling sin, and on account of that spiritual sloth which is among the remainders

of corruption, and which calls for continual reproof and correction. Hence the exercise of grace and *fruits meet for repentance* are, ordinarily, as little to be expected even in believers, without the use of means both inward and outward, as the production of good grain in the most fruitful soil without cultivation. Hence it appears to be the principal design of a great part of the word to excite believers to repentance. They are sometimes represented as wise virgins, who slumber and sleep with the foolish; and as having left their first love; and therefore they are called to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent.

LETTER XII.

Of the work of the Holy Spirit in saving conversion.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

AMONGST the charges, which Mr. Bellamy brings against Messrs. Marshal, Hervey, Boston and others, there are none which he insists upon with more acrimony or with greater professions of concern for the danger of souls, than those which regard the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in conversion.

In the first place, he charges them with denying, that regeneration is in the order of nature before faith. "The absolute necessity," says he, "of regeneration, "as antecedent to the first act of faith is a doctrine "your author [Mr. Marshal] does not believe*. In

* Dial. i. p. 14.

" another place he says, regeneration is previous to the " first act of true faith; but your faith may exist in an " unregenerate heart*". It is true, the divines, whom Mr. Bellamy opposes, did not allow any regenerate person to be destitute of saving faith: because they considered regeneration as the supernatural work of God by which he produces the grace of faith, and, in adults, the first act of faith; and therefore they represented that act as the first motion or discovery of the new creation in the soul. " We cannot possibly find, " says Mr. Marshal, that the Spirit of God doth effect- " ually work faith, or give strength to believe, till we " act it." Hence he directs us to begin the exercise of believing, before we know, that the Spirit doth or will work in us savingly: and observes, that, if we be Christ's people we will be willing to set about this work, Psal. cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* These divines also taught that the ground or warrant, upon which we are to proceed in believing, is not the saving operations of the Spirit in our heart, but Christ held forth to us in the word of promise; faith not being our sense or feeling of the former, but our spiritual apprehension of and single dependance upon the latter†. Hence they would often warn their hear-

* Dial. ii. p. 79.

† " Though the ministers of the gospel are to declare the " warrant that sinners have in the word to believe in Christ as " their Saviour, it does not follow, that all sinners have ability " to believe; for we are to distinguish between the warrant to " believe and the power to do so. The rule of faith is God's " speaking in the word; and not his speaking in the heart. The " object of your faith is the gospel declaration, and not the Spi- " rit's operation. You are carefully to distinguish betwixt your " *warrant* to believe and *power* to believe. Your right and war- " rant to believe is grounded on the gospel-offer and promise, " together with God's command to believe: this is that which " makes believing your duty, and unbelief your sin. But pow-

ers and readers against building for justification and salvation upon their feelings or a Christ within them, instead of building upon Christ as exhibited in the gospel. But they still taught, that regeneration is, in the order of nature, before faith. Mr. Marshal, towards the close of the explication of his fourth Direction, has the following words: "We are first passive, and then "active in the great work of the mystical union. We "are first apprehended of Christ, and then we appre-"hend Christ. As the sun first enlighteneth our eyes, "and then we see by its light. We may remark far-"ther," says this judicious writer, "to the glory of the "grace of God, that this union is fully accomplished "by Christ giving the Spirit of faith to us, before we "act that faith in the reception of him. Because by "the grace or Spirit of faith the soul is inclined and "disposed to an active receiving of Christ. And, no "doubt, Christ is thus united to many infants, who "have the Spirit of faith, and yet cannot act faith, be-"cause they are not come to the use of their under-"standing. But those of riper years, who are joined "passively to Christ by the Spirit of faith, will also "join themselves with him actively by the act of faith. "And, till they act this faith, they cannot know or "enjoy their union with Christ, or make use of it in "performing any other duties of holiness in this life."

"er to believe is indeed from the Spirit of God in his saving "operation. You ought, therefore, to cry for the Spirit of pow-"er to accompany the dispensation of the word. Though you "do not feel this power exerted; yet, that not being your war-"rant, but the word itself, you ought, at the call of God, to es-"say believing; for though the power of God be necessary to "believing; yet *the feeling* of his power is not so. Distinguish "carefully between *real* power and *felt* power. If, upon the "call of God, you be determined to embrace the promise, and "accordingly essay it, there is real power, though it may not "be felt till afterwards." Mr. Erskine's Pregnant Promise.

The occasion of Mr. Bellamy's censure of Mr. Marshal on this head seems to have been the following words in the explication of his viith. direction: "Faith is the first grace wrought in our regeneration "and the means of all the rest. When you truly be- "lieve, you are regenerated, and not till then." It seems unnecessary to add to what was advanced on this point in the ninth of the preceding letters. Dr. Owen expresses his judgment in the following words: "I "confess," says he, "that the method, which the gos- "pel leads unto, is, that absolution, acquitment or the "pardon of sin is the foundation of the communication "of all saving grace unto the soul; and so precedeth "all grace in the sinner. But because the absolution "or pardon of sin is to be received by faith, whereby "the soul is really made partaker of it and of all the "benefits belonging thereto; and that faith is the radi- "cal grace, which we receive in our regeneration. I "place these two together, and shall not dispute as to "their priority in nature; but in time the one doth "not precede the other*."

In the second place, Mr. Bellamy insinuates, that the account given by his opponents, of the Spirit's work in the conversion of a sinner does not include a sufficient measure of conviction. "The law," says he, "requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damna- "tion. It requires us to love God with all our hearts "as being infinitely lovely. If you take measure by "this law, your true character will appear, dead in sin, "at enmity against God, not subject to his law, nei- "ther indeed can be. If you judge of your state accor- "ding to this law, you are condemned already, and the

* On the cxxxth. Psalm, p. 361.

"wrath of God abideth on you. You are lost, you "stand guilty before God. And, if the law is holy, "just and good, your mouth is stopt. The Lord is "righteous, when he speaketh, and clear, when he "judgeth, although you should perish. All this you "must see. Yea, you must feel it, through and "through your heart, as did the apostle Paul, *The "commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* It is for "want of thorough conviction, that so many awakened "sinners take up with false comfort. Their wound "was never searched to the bottom. It was skinned "over too soon. And such slight cures, though more "easily performed, may prove fatal in the end. But "let your legal convictions be ever so deep, you will "perish, unless of his sovereign grace, he who com-"manded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in "your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Such is Mr. Bellamy's account of a thorough work of conviction: but in what respect is it preferable to the representation of the same work given by Mr. Boston and Mr. Hervey? How far inferior is all that we find in Mr. Bellamy's dialogues, letters and essay, on this subject, in respect of a discovery of the various false confidences of awakened sinners before they get a saving sight of Christ, to what we have in the third part of Mr. Boston's *Human nature in its four fold state*; especially where he shews how the branches are cut off from the natural stock in twelve particulars! But what deserves particular notice, in Mr. Bellamy's dialogues and letters, is the injustice done to Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio on this head. Theron had heard much from Aspasio about the necessity of such a work of conviction: as, for instance, in Aspasio's application of

the stag chase in the latter part of the ninth dialogue. In the fourteenth dialogue he tells Theron, that "so "long as the convictions of our great depravity, our "extreme guilt and our utterly undone condition, are "slight and hover only in the imagination, we shall be "like Gallio, listless, indifferent and caring for none of "these things. But when they are deep and penetrate "the heart, then the righteousness of a Redeemer will "be sweet, tasteful and inviting; as myrrh and frank-"incense to the smell, as milk and honey to the palate, "and gold and silver to the ruined bankrupt." When Theron had asked, what method he should use to get these convictions impressed on his heart; Aspasio gives him the following counsel. "Endeavour to un-"derstand God's holy law. Consider how pure, how "extensive, how sublimely perfect it is. Then judge "of your spiritual state not from the flattering sugges-"tions of self-love, nor from the defective examples "of your fellow creatures, but by the unerring stan-"dard of the sanctuary. Above all, beseech the God "and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to send his en-"lightening Spirit into your soul. For indeed without "the enlightening influences of the Spirit, we have the "divine law in our hand; we may comprehend its "grammatical meaning;—and yet be like blind Bar-"timeus under the meridian sun. It is the blessed "Spirit alone, who can rend the veil of ignorance from "our minds, and shew us either the wonderful things "of God's law or the glorious mysteries of the gos-"pel." He then recommends to Theron the expe-dient of keeping a diary, at least for some months. "Compile," says he, "a secret history of your heart and "conduct. Take notice of the manner in which your "time is spent, and of the strain which runs through

" your discourse: how often the former is lost in tri-
" fles; and how often the latter evaporates in vanity.
" Attend to the principle from which your actions flow,
" whether from the steady, habitual love of God, or
" from some rambling impulse and a customary pro-
" pensity to please yourself. Minute down your sins
" of omission: how frequently you neglect to glorify
" your Creator, to edify your fellow-creatures, and to
" improve yourself in knowledge and holiness. Ob-
" serve the frame of your spirit in religious duties;
" with what reluctance is a sinner brought to confess
" himself sinful in every duty, sinful in every capacity!
" Strange perverseness! But the charge is undeniable.
" However unwilling, I must plead guilty. *Thou art*
" *weighed in the balance and found wanting*, is evidently
" written on all I am, all I have, all I do. And if I
" am thus defective in my own estimation; if I am
" utterly condemned at the bar of my own conscience,
" what then shall I do, when God riseth up? And
" when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? I now
" see the necessity of an imputed righteousness.
" Without some such object for my trust, I am un-
" done." In the fifteenth Dialogue, Theron says to Aspasio; " My sins like an armed host are set in
" dreadful array, and surround me on every side. Jus-
" tice, like an injured and incensed foe, unsheaths the
" sword and makes a loud demand for vengeance. No
" righteousness of my own presents itself, to which I
" may fly for refuge. The method of salvation in
" which I formerly confided, is a bridge broken down,
" and leaves me without any possibility of escape."
In another place, Theron cries out, " O my Aspasio,
" I cannot believe. I feel my impotence. My mind

" is like the withered arm. I am ashamed to recollect " what mistaken notions I once entertained concerning " the easiness of believing, as though it were to be " performed like the act of rising from our seat, or step- " ping into a coach, by our own strength and at our own " time. What a stranger was I then to the blindness " of my understanding and the hardness of my heart ; " to my bondage under unbelief, and averseness to the " way of salvation *by grace through faith?*"

From these quotations it is evident, that Mr. Hervey's Theron was the subject of a thorough work of conviction, whilst he was under the instruction of Aspasio: and therefore Mr. Bellamy cannot be vindicated, as a fair dealer, in representing the same Theron as an utter stranger to such a work, till he met with Paulinus. In the first of his Dialogues, Theron is made to give an account of his experience during his intercourse with Aspasio, without a single hint of the conviction so plainly represented in the passages just now quoted. When Mr. Bellamy makes Theron relate his conversion by means of the doctrine of Paulinus, all is new: Theron had never before discovered, " that he " is liable by the righteous sentence of the law, to " eternal damnation for every want of perfect obedience; " that he is absolutely without strength, dead in sin, " lost, condemned by law, self-condemned, his mouth " stopt, guilty before God*." This could not be, that Theron, who, under Aspasio's dealing with him, had become a true believer; that is, according to Mr. Marshal, one who is under a deep and abiding conviction, " that he is by nature a child of wrath, fallen from God

* Bellamy's Letters and Dial. pages 112, 113, 114.

" by the sin of the first Adam, dead in trespasses and " sins, subject to the curse of God's law, to the power " of Satan, to insupportable misery through all eter- " nity, under an utter impossibility of procuring recon- " ciliation with God or any spiritual life, by his own " endeavours in the way of the covenant of works; or " of finding any way of escape from this sinful and " miserable condition by his natural reason or under- " standing. A true sense of our sin and of our con- " demnation by the law is necessary to make us fly to " Christ: and for this, as one great end, was the law " given, Gal. iii. 22, 23, 24. Matth. ix. 13. Acts ii. " 37. Without sense of sin, there will be no prizing " of Christ, or desire of holiness; but rather abuse of " Christ to carnal security and licentiousness. Those " that were stung with the fiery serpent, looked up to " the brazen serpent."

The truth is, a thorough conviction of our sinfulness and misery is necessarily implied in the appropriating faith contended for by Mr. Marshal and Mr. Hervey: for, without such conviction, persons will not be brought to any serious dealing with God about the ground of their application of Christ to themselves in particular. Whereas the assent that persons give to the most important speculative truths, as such, may be, and too often is, without any serious concern about the condition of their souls.

In the third place, Mr. Bellamy represents Theron as under the power of delusion; because, in his supposed conversion, he is represented as having the testimony of the Spirit enabling him, in the direct act of faith to call God *his Father*; according to the following passage of Mr. Marshal's Treatise in the explication of

his tenth direction. "We judge" says he, "that the "Spirit beareth witness, that we are the children of "God, by giving us saving faith itself, by the direct "act of which all true believers are enabled to trust as- "suredly on Christ for the enjoyment of the adoption "of children and all his salvation according to the free "promise of God; and to call God Father, without re- "flecting on any good qualifications in themselves." "The holy Spirit," says another of these evangelical writers, "brings Christ, his righteousness and salva- "tion nigh to us in the promise of the gospel; clearing "at the same time our right and warrant to intermed- "dle with all, without fear of vicious intromission; en- "couraging and enabling us to a measure of confident "application to ourselves of all, as given freely, with- "out money and without price."

On account of these passages Mr. Bellamy's Paulinus says to Theron: "Thus, at last, you give up your "warrant from the written word, as in fact there is no "such thing contained in the Bible: and now your re- "course is to the Spirit. He cannot clear up a right or "warrant where there is no such thing to be cleared up. "It is not the business of faith to make new unscriptu- "ral revelation. If you trust to the testimony of the "Spirit, without any regard to the sincerity of your gra- "ces, you have nothing but a Spirit, a naked Spirit to "depend upon. And if your spirit should prove to be "Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, you "are deluded,—your soul is lost—for ever lost."*

The censure, which Mr. Bellamy passes in these words upon the Divines whom he opposes, is very unjust in two respects: 1st, in regard that they are thereby

* Dial. p. 67, 98.

represented as directing men to rest on a naked Spirit without the word: 2dly, by insinuating, that the persuasion, which these divines speak of in the passages quoted is an opinion that persons entertain of themselves, that they are already in a state of adoption. If I were labouring under some dangerous disease, and a physician offered a medicine, affirming it to be an infallible remedy for that disease; in the very act of accepting his offer, I would have an assurance of my recovery, proportioned to my esteem of the skill and honesty of the physician. Yet this assurance would be of a different sort from that which I would have upon any experience of an actual cure. Such is the difference between the assurance which a person has, in the direct act of faith, that God is God and Father in Christ, and the assurance that he has of the same thing by finding in himself the scriptural marks and character of a child of God. The consistency between these two sorts of assurance was shewn in a former letter.

That believers have assuring views of their relation to God as their own Father in the direct act of faith; and that, in these views, they have the testimony of the Spirit, appears from what is ascribed to the Spirit as the worker both of faith and of prayer.

1. As the worker of faith, the Holy Spirit enables us to embrace the promise as yea and amen to us in Christ: among which promises are those of adoption: Jerem. iii. 13. *But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father, and thou shalt not turn away from me.* This work of the Holy Spirit lies in shewing us the free access and full warrant, which we have, as perishing sin-

ners of Adam's family, to whom the gospel is preached, to make an immediate application of that gospel, and particularly of the promise of adoption in Christ, to ourselves. Nay, the Holy Spirit shuts us up to this immediate application by representing it as our indispensable duty and the neglect of it as the most henious sin, 1 John iii. 23. v. 10. The matter of this testimony of the Spirit is not, that we are already brought into a state of adoption, or that we have in our hearts the gracious dispositions of God's children; but that the gospel promise is the word of God, and his word to us in particular; a word to be depended upon as our security in Christ for every promised blessing. None will say, that this testimony of the Spirit is unnecessary, who duly consider what the scripture teaches, that faith is not of ourselves, being the supernatural gift of God;—and, what each of us may feel, that our understandings are blind to the things of the Spirit of God, and our wills averse to the way of salvation by free grace through faith. Nor can this testimony be delusive; since the matter of it is no other than what we have in the Holy Scripture, applied, according to its true meaning, to our case; since this application of the word by the Holy Spirit is no other than that work of faith, whereby Christ is revealed in our hearts as the Lord our Righteousness. John xvi. 8, 9, 14. *When the Comforter is come, he will reprove or convince the world* (his own who are by nature of the world) not only *of sin*, but also *of righteousness*, of his own righteousness wrought out in their nature, being sufficient to satisfy all the demands of the Divine law. *He shall receive of mine*, says Christ, *and shall shew it unto you.* And surely the things of the gospel-promise are amongst the things that he will shew unto us.

This testimony of the Holy Spirit, clearing a person's warrant to intermeddle with the gospel promise and to believe it with application to himself, if not the whole, appears to be a principal part of what is meant by our being *sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, Ephes. i. 13. It is true, that by the Ephesians being *sealed with the Holy Spirit* many valuable writers understand a work distinct from that which passed on them at their first believing. But this construction of the words does not seem necessary. For, though some gifts of the Spirit, such, for example, as were miraculous, were given to persons after their first believing; yet it will not follow, that the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of promise and the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, was not given to persons at the first moment of their believing. The giving of the Holy Spirit, in our first believing answers such purposes as are analogous to those answered by sealing among men; such as the purposes of distinguishing persons as the Lord's peculiar people, and of insuring to them the full enjoyment of eternal life. Though the words of the apostle in our translation be rendered, *after that ye believed, ye were sealed*, yet it is obvious to any one who reads the original, that the participle and the verb being in the same tense, may be rendered, *believing ye were sealed*. So words in the same construction are often rendered: Mark vii. 34. *And looking up to heaven, he sighed*. Luke xxiv. 18. *One of them whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him*. So that there is nothing in the form of the apostle's expression against the following exposition of Mr. Hervey and some others. "In "believing ye were partakers of this sealing sanctify-"ing spirit, conformably to the expostulation of the "the apostle on another occasion; *Received ye the*

" Spirit, by the works of the law, or by the hearing of " faith?"

2. As our helper in prayer, the Holy Spirit enables us to call God our Father by the direct act of faith. When our Lord directs us to approach to God in prayer, saying, *Our Father*, he intimates, that some apprehension of God as our Father in Christ is necessary to acceptable prayer; and therefore if no well-grounded apprehension of God, as standing in that relation to us, can be attained in the direct act of faith; it will follow, that we cannot approach to God in prayer acceptably, but when we find in ourselves those good qualifications, from which we can certainly infer our sonship: and thus believers must be excluded from the throne of grace, when they *walk in darkness and have no light*; that is, when they are under a peculiar necessity of applying to that throne. But this is quite contrary to the doctrine of the Bible, which assures us, that every prayer offered up in the faith of Christ's name is accepted. John xvi. 23. Mark xi. 24. and if any poor sinner is enabled to come in the exercise of faith, even though as yet he can find no good qualifications in himself, he shall not be cast out, John vi. 37.

Thus, it appears, that there is a testimony which the Holy Spirit bears to the word of the gospel in the hearts of believers; as well as a testimony which he bears to the work of grace in their hearts. Mr. Bellamy had no ground to set the one in opposition to the other. They agree well together. The testimony of the Spirit, setting home the gospel-promise on our hearts, first brings us to the direct act or exercise of faith, which is productive of the fruits of new obedience. And then the testimony which the Spirit bears to the sincerity of our faith, as manifested by the fruits of it,

encourageth us to go on in the exercise of that faith. They are inseparable: for the testimony of the Spirit, bringing a person to the direct act of faith, will be followed, in some measure, by the testimony of the Spirit to the work of grace in his heart. They who pretend to have the former, while they have no heart-felt concern to attain the latter, are self-deceivers, who take up with a feigned faith. They, on the other hand, who pretend to have the latter without or before the former, are legalists, who set up the idol of self-righteousness.

In the fourth place, Mr. Bellamy charges Mr. Marshal, Mr. Hervey, Mr. Boston and others with propagating delusion under the notion of conversion; because, according to him, their converts are "blind "to the beauty of the Divine nature, and have no love "to the Divine law." Thus Theron, after he becomes a disciple of Mr. Bellamy's Paulinus, acknowledges, that in the religion which he learned from Aspasio, "the infinite amiableness of the Deity was wholly left "out;" and that Aspasio's doctrine led him "to look "upon law, obligation, duty, as disagreeable, dead and "legal things*."

Enough has been said in the ninth and tenth of the preceding letters to shew the falsehood of this charge against the doctrine of the writers now mentioned. Indeed one can hardly read a page of their excellent writings without being convinced of the baseness of this calumny. At present it may be sufficient to refer to the explication of the first direction in Mr. Marshal's treatise on sanctification; and to add the character of a real Christian as drawn by Mr. Boston. "A real

* Bellamy's Dialogues and Letters, page 124, 127.

"Christian," says that judicious writer, "is one who "loves God for himself as well as for his benefits with "a supreme love above all persons and all things. "He approveth the holy law even in that very point, "wherein it strikes against his most beloved lust. He "is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims and ends "of his service. After all, he sees nothing in himself "to trust in before the Lord, Christ and his fulness "being the stay of his soul."

The truth is, because these writers will not allow our love to God and the good works, that flow from it, to belong to the ground of the appropriation of Christ to ourselves, which is in the direct act of faith; therefore they deny, according to Mr. Bellamy, that love to God and good works necessarily belong to the Christian; a conclusion as absurd as it would be to infer from a person's denying the walls and roof to be the foundation of a house, that he denied them to be at all necessary to constitute the house.

In fine, a person is, no doubt, a self-deceiver, who thinks himself converted, without a supernatural change, without a thorough conviction of the sinfulness and misery of his natural state, without a scriptural ground of hope, without a spiritual discernment of the beauty of holiness. But none can be farther from representing such a person as a true convert than Mr. Marshal, Mr. Boston, Mr. Hervey and others who teach the same doctrine. Having considered some differences between Mr. Bellamy and his opponents on the head of saving conversion, which are only pretended; we may now proceed to point out some real differences between him and them on this subject.

1. Mr. Bellamy teaches, that sinners are not warranted to look to Christ as their own Saviour, immediately, or till they be so and so qualified. For, according to him, a person must not only be convinced of sin, but his heart must be reconciled to the Divine law: he must love it, and call upon all other intelligent creatures to love it, before the gospel come into view; and consequently before he look to Christ. If this be a just view of conversion,—then sinners are not to be called to look or come to Christ, till they be reconciled to the law and in love with it in all the extent of its precept and penalty. But the divines whom Mr. Bellamy opposes, maintained, that sinners ought to look or come to Christ immediately upon hearing the gospel preached to them:—because the gospel-call is directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely, Prov. viii. 4. Isai. xlv. 22.—because Christ has given his ministers a commission to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark xvi. 15.—because they are to make an offer of Christ to those who know not (what is their real spiritual condition,) that they are *wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked*, Revel. iii. 17, 18.—because the Spirit's work in convincing men of unbelief, supposes that Christ has been exhibited and offered to them, John xvi. 9.—because it cannot be denied, that the Lord may and does give some persons a spiritual view both of their perishing condition, and of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, at once. Of which case Zaccheus, Luke xix. 9. the Samaritans, Acts viii. 5, 8. Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. are examples.

2. Mr. Bellamy appears to hold, that, under the operation of the Holy Spirit, sinners attain heart-reconciling views of God's law in its holiness and spirituality, before the gospel be believed or come into

view. On the contrary, his opponents hold, that the Holy Spirit makes use of the gospel as the means of reconciling our hearts to the law; and that there is no genuine exercise of love to God or his holy law, till it please God to reveal his Son in us. These divines shewed that conviction of sin by the law is subservient to the Lord's gracious design upon elect sinners, not by reconciling the heart to the holiness of the law, before the gospel come into view, but by teaching them their absolute need of gospel-grace in order to overcome their cursed enmity against the holiness of the law.

"If by being regenerated," says Mr. Bellamy, "is "meant being enabled to see the holy beauty of divine "truths, we are regenerated neither by the law nor by "the gospel, but by the immediate influence of the "Holy Spirit. If by regenerated is meant holy affec- "tions being begotten and excited in the heart, *in this* "sense we are regenerated by the law and by the gos- "pel and by every divine truth in general."*

Answer. We allow, that a spiritual and saving knowledge of Divine truth is attained by regeneration; and that regeneration, strictly taken, is the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. It is his *immediate* work, as preventing and excluding all causal activity of the creature which is the passive subject of it; but not as excluding his powerful word; without which regeneration is not to be expected, 1 Pet. i. 23. *Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.* If it be asked, What word this is? we have an answer in v. 25. *This is the word which by the gospel is preached*

* An Essay on the Nature, &c. p. 192.

unto you. It is true, that, under the saving influences of the Holy Spirit, all Divine truths excite holy affections answerable to their nature in true Christians. But every Divine truth is not of such a nature as to afford a poor sinner a ground for the faith of salvation. The following propositions are Divine truths, *The man that doeth these things shall live in them.* Cursed is every one that *continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* But who will say, that these truths, without the gospel, afford a sinner any ground for the faith of salvation? And yet without that faith there is no regeneration or saving conversion: and none have any holy affections without or before conversion; that is, while they have no spiritual life in them. It is allowed, that truly gracious affections are excited and promoted by means of the truths belonging to the law; but then it is in a soul that has been already quickened by the gospel. That sinners have their first spiritual quickening by the gospel appears by the designations that are given to the gospel; such as, *The power of God unto salvation,* Rom. i. 16. *The Spirit that giveth life, and the ministration of the Spirit,* 2 Corinth. iii. 6, 8. To the same purpose the apostle says in 1 Corinth. iv. 15. *In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel:* an expression, which "holds forth," as a commentator in Marlorate's collection observes, "two instrumental causes of regenera-"tion; of which one is more immediate, that is, the "gospel; the other more remote, which is the preach-"er. We are begotten again before God by means of "the gospel. Take away the gospel, and we are but "so many dead men under the curse." Nor had Mr. Bellamy any reason to insinuate that any thing else is taught in the following words of the xixth Psalm:

The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. For the term *law* is often used, in a lax sense, for the whole of God's revealed will, and sometimes is chiefly to be understood of the doctrines and promises of the gospel, as in Isai. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2. Ps. cxix. 92. The apostle calls the gospel the *law of faith* in opposition to *the law of works.* Hence we cannot esteem these conversions to be of a saving kind which have been effected by means of the law *working wrath*, without the gospel, that is, without any spiritual views of the way of salvation by Christ crucified. For, though we allow, that the Lord's work in saving conversion is not alike in all the subjects of it; but there may be and is diversity in the outward occasions of it, in distinctness of experience, and in other respects;—yet some things are, according to the rule of God's word, so essential to that blessed work, that if any person think himself to be converted without them, he deceives himself. That a spiritual discernment of the way of salvation by grace through our Lord Jesus Christ, is one of these things, appears from such texts as the following. 2 Corinth. iv. 3. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost*, John vi. 40. *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.* Matth. xi. 25. *At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* In these passages, it is represented as essential to the character of a true convert, that he not only has a capacity to apprehend the way of salvation through Jesus

Christ, but actually does apprehend it through a supernatural and saving revelation of it.*

3. Mr. Bellamy's convert speaks much of his reconciliation to the law, but little or nothing of his being divorced from or dead to the law as a covenant. Whereas his opponents represent our death to the law in this view as essential to saving conversion, and as most difficult to be attained. A great part of the writings of these divines is taken up in discovering the various plausible pretexts, under which men, professing to be Christians, continue obstinately attached to their first husband, the law or covenant of works, depending on something they feel or do as the condition of their justification before God, and seeing no evil in that delusive and soul-ruining dependance. This attachment is kept up by reflecting upon what they reckon their virtuous dispositions and conduct; upon the many outward privileges, spiritual and temporal, which God has granted them; upon the mercy of God and the merits

* The opinion expressed in Mr. Bellamy's words, just now quoted, reminds one of the Popish notion taken notice of in a former letter, namely, That faith justifies as well by believing the threatenings, the commands and histories, as by believing the promises of the word. Mr. Bellamy's opinion seems to be favoured by the following words of an elegant writer: "Divine truths," says he, "are like chain shot, they go together, "and we need not perplex ourselves which should enter first; "if any one enter, it will draw the rest after it." This remark is true, if it mean, that a minister, in handling a subject, may use any method which appears convenient: he may either speak, first, of the effects, and then of the causes of the subject; or first, of the causes and then of the effects: he may treat first of holiness in heart and life, and then of faith in Christ, uniting us to him, as the means of attaining that holiness; or on the contrary, first, of faith, and then of holiness as the fruit of faith. But if he takes no care to keep cause and effect, the means and the end, law and gospel, distinct, assigning to each its proper place and use, he does not rightly divide the word of truth; he is unfaithful both to the Lord Christ and to the souls of men.

of Christ as what may supply the defects of their own righteousness; upon the faith and repentance, which they imagine they find in themselves, and which they vainly hope will entitle them to the benefit of the Redeemer's righteousness. Upon such pretences do men even under the gospel dispensation, cleave to their first husband, the law; the most part, it is to be feared, to their eternal ruin; and even the elect; till the Lord the Spirit, beginning a work of saving grace in their souls, discovers to them the delusion; and shews them that unless their marriage to the law be dissolved by a new, spiritual marriage to Christ Jesus, they cannot be saved. To this event the law itself, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, contributes. Set home on their hearts in its spirituality and vast extent, it convinces them of the vanity of all their attempts to satisfy its demands. The tremendous voice of the threatening proclaims that sinners have nothing to look for under the law's dominion but everlasting destruction; for *as many as are of the works of the law*, or seek life in the way of it, *are under the curse*. But it is properly *through the body of Christ*, through his death, apprehended by faith, that they *become dead to the law, being married to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that they may bring forth fruit unto God*. As for any remaining bias in their minds towards their old husband, they see the evil of it, they groan under it; they hope and long for deliverance from it (as well as from the other deceitful lusts of their depraved nature,) through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine which is so mortifying to the pride of the human heart, has always met with the contempt and opposition of the world. But it is a doctrine which faithful ministers will insist upon, as peculiarly necessary for making a stand

against various Popish and Arminian errors, and for directing exercised souls into the paths of true peace.

4. The faith attained in conversion, according to Mr. Bellamy, is only a general belief of God's willingness to receive sinners that return to him by Jesus Christ. But, according to his opponents, there is, in the faith of every true convert, some measure of real confidence or trust, upon the ground of the gospel-promise, that God gives Christ to him in particular, and that Christ will deliver him from sin and wrath. This faith wrestles against all contrary doubts and fears. "The Spirit of the Lord," says Mr. Boston, "carries "home the gospel-offer on the soul; so that the man "believes that the offer is to him in particular, that "the refuge is open and the portion free to him, ac- "cording to the word in 1 John v. 11. *This is the re-* "*cord, that God hath given to us eternal life.* Thus "poor sinners are brought to take a God in Christ for "their refuge and portion in the land of the living."

Upon the whole, Mr. Bellamy is chargeable with a dangerous departure from the simplicity of scripture doctrine concerning conversion; while, in opposing Mr. Marshal, Mr. Hervey and others, he evidently limits the gospel call to persons so and so qualified; while he holds that the law, as distinguished from the gospel and before the gospel come into view, may be the mean of regeneration; while there is such a striking contrast between the faithfulness of his opponents in warning sinners of their extreme danger from their obstinate attachment to their first husband the law, and the silence he observes on that subject through all his Dialogues and Letters; and, in fine, while he teaches sinners, that they have no ground in the gospel-offer to

make an immediate application of Christ crucified to themselves in particular, and that there is no other belief necessary to saving faith, than a general belief of God's willingness to receive sinners that return to him by Jesus Christ.

Having considered Mr. Bellamy's account of saving conversion, we proceed to add a few remarks, which may be of use to prevent some mistakes (not uncommon in our day) on so important a subject and which may serve as a conclusion to this and the preceding letters.

1. The work of saving conversion is not effected by the word without the Spirit, nor by the Spirit without the word. Some persons have better natural parts and natural tempers than others, and are also more conformable in the general tenor of their conduct to the letter of the law. At the same time, they are under such a dispensation of word and providence, as tends, in its own nature, to their conversion. Yet none of these advantages, nor all of them, put together, are sufficient to produce that happy change. Our Saviour intimates that the more ignorant and vicious are often pitched upon by the sovereign grace of God, whilst the more knowing and seemingly virtuous are left in their natural state, Matth. xi. 25. xxi. 31. The unbelieving Jews enjoyed the best means of grace under the ministry of Christ and his apostles; and yet, instead of being converted, they were more and more hardened, Act. xxxviii. 25, 26, 27. Nor is the conversion of the elect by the word to be ascribed to the natural power of their freewill; since the scripture represents them before their conversion as totally alienated from God, as incapable of any act or motion that is spiritually good or pleasing to God, as always unwilling, till the effectual

grace of God make them willing*. The truth is, conversion is the victorious work of the Holy Spirit; in which he not only makes an offer or proposal of sufficient grace, but actually bestows it: he not only *offers* to take away the stony heart, and to give a new heart, a heart of flesh, but he actually *does so* according to the promise†. And, in doing so, he exerts almighty, irresistible power, Ephes. i. 19. Hence this work is called a being born again of the Spirit, a resurrection or spiritual quickening, a new creation, Ephes. i. 19. John iii. 5. Ephes. ii. 10. Hereby the Holy Spirit not only gives us a power of believing and walking in the path of duty; but he gives the very act, work or walk itself, Phillip. i. 29. ii. 13. Zechar. x. 12. Yet it does not follow, that the Holy Spirit, in this work, acts upon man as a stock or a stone; because he does not act without the word, nor otherwise than in opening the understanding to understand the word and in determining the will to receive it. The whole design of his blessed work is to render the subject of it conformable to his own word, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Hence we cannot reckon unaccountable, involuntary bodily convulsions and distractions among the proper effects of this work: since these are none of the effects ascribed to it in scripture-promises or examples. Nor is any bodily exercise to be admitted as a proper effect of this work but what is most voluntary, rational and agreeable to the word.

2. The spiritual light of saving knowledge, which is attained by the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion, is the true spring of all gracious affections. We grant, that it is not every sort of knowledge of religious

* Coloss. i. 21. Rom. viii. 7, 8. 1 Corinth. iv. 7.
† Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

truth, that is so: for persons may have much knowledge by the light of nature, by the letter of the word, and by such gifts and operations of the Spirit as these were endued with, whom our Lord represents as saying, *We have prophesied in thy name;* who were, notwithstanding that, such as never knew him in a saving manner. Nay, the apostle assures us that persons may *understand all mysteries and all knowledge;* and yet have no *charity*, no true love to God or to their neighbours for his sake. Their knowledge is a cold unprofitable assent to historical facts, to doctrines or notions; it is only such knowledge as puffeth up; it is not that glorious Divine light, by which true converts have such a view of their own vileness and the mercy and love of God in Christ, as fills them with wonder, love and praise; and by which they have such spiritual convictions of sin as excite a holy indignation against it and ingenuous shame and self-loathing on account of it before God. As this light is abiding, so are the affections which spring from it; if not in the same degree of sensible exercise, yet in the truth and reality of them. Whereas the religious affections which are caused by external impressions are like a land-flood that soon passes away. Such are most of those violent affections and pangs which occasion bodily agitations. We should examine from what root our religious affections spring. Unless they proceed from the abiding light of saving knowledge, they are not truly gracious affections.

3. The more that true converts are humble under a sense of their own impotence or natural inability to do any thing spiritually good; and the more lively they are in the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ as their righteousness and strength: they are the more

active in every good word and work. This mark serves to distinguish true converts from what may be called evangelical hypocrites. Such hypocrites abuse the doctrine of their natural inability to do what is spiritually good as a pretext or excuse for their wilful neglect of duty. Whereas as the faith of this truth in true converts excites them to cleave to Christ alone as their strength; and thus they are animated to the practise of duty, as knowing, that, however weak in themselves, they have a sufficiency of strength in him. *He that abideth in me*, says Christ, *and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit:* and then he adds as the reason, *For without me, ye can do nothing;* thus intimating, that the deeper sense his followers have of their weakness or inability in themselves, they will be the more dependant on him; and the more dependant they are on him, they will be the more fruitful in good works. The notion, which hypocrites have, of justification by free grace through the imputed righteousness of Christ, flatters them in their sinful security. *Let us continue in sin*, say they, *that grace may abound.* Whereas true converts find nothing so effectual to stir them up to the mortification of sin as faith's views of Christ's obedience unto death, which procured the death of sin, in them. O, say they, shall we harbour sin, which Christ came to destroy? How can we spare these lusts, on account of which God spared not his own son! The faith of deliverance through the imputed righteousness of Christ from the law as a covenant or condition of life is the animating principle of their obedience to the law as a rule of life. This persuasion, that they are not their own, but that they are bought with a price, engages them to glorify God in their bodies and their spirits which are his. Farther, hypocrites abuse the doc-

trine concerning the work of the grace and Spirit of Christ in effectually determining and enabling us to do what is spiritually good, while they make it a pretence for giving themselves up to sloth and the neglect of the appointed means of salvation. But sincere converts, who truly understand and believe this doctrine, find it to be the most powerful incentive and incouragement to the diligent use of these means. The more clearly they see, that God worketh in them to will and to do of his good pleasure; they are the more incited to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Thus the Christian self-abasement and a single dependance on the grace of God in Christ, which the blind w rld consider as good for nothing but to make men slothful, are the true principles of all holy obedience.

4. True converts seek to partake of the benefits of Christ's purchase universally and in the way of union to his person. They are not for dividing the benefits of Christ from one another. They desire sanctification as well as pardon; a present as well as a future salvation. Nor are they for dividing his benefits from himself. Their great concern is to be found in him, and to receive his benefits in him and with him, 1. Corinth. i. 30. This is the great and fatal error of hypocrites, that they seek some of his benefits but not all; not a marriage union with himself. They seek *the loaves*, or some carnal, selfish gratification, but not himself. Or if they seem to seek himself, it is not for his own sake, but for the sake of something else.

5. The work of the Holy Spirit in conversion is a secret work, though every member of the church ought to seek and may attain the certain knowledge of his own conversion. It is still represented in scripture

as a hidden and mysterious work, Eccles. xi. 5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child, even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.* John iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Hence every one is enjoined to use diligence, *all diligence* in order to attain the knowledge of his effectual calling or conversion*. The opinion, that little care or attention to our own hearts and ways is necessary to the attainment of this knowledge is both contrary to scripture and of a soul ruining tendency, as it leads persons to take up with a counterfeit conversion; which is one of the deep devices of Satan for preventing a real conversion. It is however a great truth, that we ought to get this knowledge; and while we want it, or so far as we are in the dark about our gracious state, we ought to be deeply humbled, on that account, before the Lord; and we ought to wait upon the Lord and look continually to him for this blessed attainment, in the use of the appointed means. We are to assure ourselves that, though it may be withheld from a true believer for a time, yet it will be at length attained by those that continue in the exercise of faith, in a holy watchfulness against whatever tends to darken their evidences, in self-examination, and in prayer for the Holy Spirit to shine upon his own work in their souls as well as upon his own word. For the Lord will not be a barren wilderness or a land of darkness to any that truly seek his face.

* 2 Pet. i. 10.

LETTER XIII.

Instances of a decline in purity of doctrine. Causes of that decline.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

OUR holy religion is greatly recommended by a just comparison of it with other schemes of religion. What a horrible representation of the Deity was given by the Pagan idolatry, *changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things!* How manifestly are the Jews *condemned of themselves*, in their obstinate rejection of Jesus Christ, whilst they acknowledge the Divine authority of the Old Testament! What an absurd medley of falsehood, superstition, and sensuality is the system exhibited in Mahomed's Koran! With regard to the Socinians, *I make little difference*, said the celebrated Grotius*, *between them and the Mahomedans. They retain the name, but renounce the substance of Christianity.* They are chargeable with blasphemy in denying the truth concerning the Divine simplicity, eternity, omnipresence and foreknowledge; in denying the Deity and satisfaction of Christ, and the Deity and Personality of the Holy Spirit. As to the Papists, they make the word of God of none effect by their traditions. They corrupt the spiritual authority, which Christ hath appointed in his Church, by adding to it an exorbitant worldly dominion in the offices of

* In a letter to Walleus, written in the earlier part of his life, he has these words concerning the Socinians: Christianiatem (quantum ego intelligo) nomine retinent, re destruunt. Itaque hos a Mahumetistis non longe separo.

their pope, cardinals and other ecclesiastical dignitaries: they make their inherent grace or the pretended merit of their works the ground of their justification before God. They have introduced a multitude of men's inventions into every part of religious worship. They have other objects of religious worship than the only true God; and other Mediators than Jesus Christ. And then, in order to carry their obstinacy and impudence in maintaining such gross corruptions to the highest pitch, they ascribe infallibility to the judgment of their church. As to the Arminian scheme it manifestly sacrifices the independency of God in his decrees, and the glory of his free and sovereign grace to the idol of man's free-will*. It detracts from the efficacy of the blood and Spirit of Christ, in order that the creature may have some ground of glorification, as making itself differ. In this respect, it is diametrically opposite to the design of the gospel, Rom. iii. 27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith.* 1 Corinth. i. 29, 30. *That no flesh may glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto*

* "Right reason," says a truly philosophical writer, "gives "its voice most decisively in favor of the doctrine of the Re- "formed churches, and in favor of it alone. What is taught "about God and Divine things by the various opposers of that "doctrine is not only without reason but contrary to it. Their "first and radical error is their denying, that God alone is ab- "solutely independent: this is a truth, which, as it is constant- "ly maintained by the orthodox, establishes the victorious "grace of God, and overthrows its great enemy, the pride of "man's depraved nature." Reformatæ nostræ fidei, atque uni nostræ, plaudit ac testimonium efficacissimum dicit ipsa recta ratio; dum circa Deum et res Divinas modis indignissimis, sine ratione ac contra rationem, delirat universa secus sentientium cohors, &c. Gerardi De Vries Exercitationes rationales. Exercit. iv. Sect. 7.

his wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. iv. 7. *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

The systems of error now mentioned are very comprehensive: and to them may be reduced all the modifications of false religion, which have prevailed in the world.

But in opposition to such delusive and soul-ruining schemes, true Christianity, as it is represented in the Bible, and agreeably to the Bible, in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches, is the only religion, which gives all the perfections of God their due glory; which exhibits the person of Christ and his finished work as the only ground of our justification and salvation; and which makes ample provision for our sanctification and our comfort. It will be found to be the glory of these churches to retain the purity of that religion in the doctrine of their ministers and in the profession of their members. But is not this glory, in a great measure, departed from most of the Reformed Churches at this day? Indeed there appears to be a decline in respect of the purity of doctrine even amongst those who still make a general profession of adherence to the reformation-cause. Of this decline the opinions of Mr. Bellamy considered in the preceding letters, are instances. To these it is proposed in this letter to add a few more, which claim the serious attention of our Christian brethren.

I. Some, who acknowledge, that there are three persons in the Godhead, deny the eternal and incom-

prehensible generation of the second Person, or that he is called the Son of God on that account, alledging, that this appellation is founded in his Mediatorial office, in his incarnation, or in a senseless fiction about the existence of his human soul long before any other created being. This opinion contradicts the most explicit profession both of the ancient churches against the Arians, and of the Reformed Churches against the Socinians: which profession is well expressed in the following words of the Synod of Dort: "We believe, that Jesus "Christ, with regard to his Divine nature, is the only "begotten Son of God; begotten from eternity, not "made or created (for thus he would be a creature;) "but of the same essence with the Father, coeternal, "the express image of the Father's person, and the "brightness of his glory; in all things his equal. Who "is indeed the Son of God not only from the time in "which he assumed our nature, but from all eternity, "as the following testimonies, compared together, teach "us: Moses declares, *that God created the world;* and "saint John, that *all things were made by the Word,* "whom he also calls God; and the apostle, that *God* "*made the worlds by his Son;* likewise that God created "all things by Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, necessary "to admit, that he who is called God, the Word, the "Son and Jesus Christ was then existing, since all "things were created by him: and therefore the pro-"phet Micah says, *His goings forth were of old from the* "*days of eternity,* and the apostle, *He is without begin-*"*ning of days, and without end of life.* He is therefore "the true, eternal and almighty God, whom we invoke, "adore and worship*".

* Credimus Jesum Christum, secundum naturam suam Divinam, Unigenitum Dei Filium esse; ab æterno genitum;

The Sonship of Christ, if it were founded in his Mediatorial office, would imply inferiority to the Father; for, in respect of that office, he is the Father's servant, Isai. xlii. 1. and xlix. 6. and therefore the Father is said to be *greater than he*, John xiv. 28. But it is plain, that the scripture teaches us to consider the Sonship of Christ as a title not implying any sort of inferiority, but expressing his equality with the Father, as being one in essence with the Father. When Christ called God *his own Father*, the Jews understood him as meaning such a claim of Sonship, as was the same with a claim of equality with God, a claim of being God: and this construction of our Saviour's claim is not denied, but confirmed by his answer, John v. 18, 19. *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his own Father,* making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doth, these also doth the Son likewise. The Son can do nothing of himself* or separately from the Father? But does this imply any inferiority of the Son to the Father? By no means. For the Father can as little do any thing but what the Son does likewise: the reason is, that the Father and the Son are one and the same infinite Being; and the relation between these persons is such as necessarily supposes that they possess the same nature and perfections, John x. 30. and therefore they can do nothing without, or separately from, one another.

non factum aut creatum, [ita enim facet creatura;] sed ejusdem cum Patre essentiæ, &c.
Acta Synodi Nationalis Dordechtanæ.

* The Greek words, *Patera idion*, signify *his own Father*.

The eternal generation of the Son is very plainly revealed in Scripture. Psal. ii, 7. *I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.* The matter of the *decree*, mentioned in the first part of this verse, is evidently set forth in the next two verses relating to the future enlargement of Christ's kingdom. But the Sonship is evidently set forth as the ground upon which that decree proceeds. The Sonship must therefore have been as ancient as the decree, that is, from everlasting. By *this day* in the text we are not to understand any one of man's days, but God's day, the day of eternity: which, with God, is all one permanent day, or a perpetual now; in which there is neither past nor future. Prov. viii. 24, 25. *When there were no depths I was brought forth: before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth.* There is no reason to doubt, whether by wisdom, introduced as the party speaking here, we are to understand the Son of God. The passage now quoted and several others in this chapter are such as it would be manifestly absurd to understand literally of God's attribute of wisdom, or figuratively of any other person than the second Person of the Godhead. This was never questioned in the ancient church, no, not by the Arians themselves*. The expression *I was brought forth*, cannot well be understood of Christ's mediatorial office. For if it be so understood, it must denote either his appointment to that office, or his actual execution of it. But this bringing forth cannot be understood of the latter, which was not from eternity, but in time. Nor can it be understood of the former; till it be shewn, that, in the sacred scriptures, *to bring forth* signifies *to decree or appoint to an office.*

* Wisheart's Theologia, p. 748.

If the Sonship of Christ were founded in his office of Mediator; then it would be most proper to say, that God sent the Mediator, that he might be his only begotten Son: whereas the constant language of scripture is that he sent his only begotten Son to be our Mediator, 1 John iv. 10, 14. Christ's bearing the office of our Mediator proceeded from his Father's call and his own voluntary undertaking, Isai, xlii. 6. Heb. v. 4, 5. Psal. xl. 7. But both these suppose the Sonship of Christ; and therefore they could not be the cause or occasion of it.

But the deadly poison of this erroneous notion lies in its inconsistency with the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity. When the eternal Sonship of Christ, which is the primary and necessary distinction between the first and second Persons in the Godhead is denied, how can the doctrine of the Trinity be maintained? For if the primary and necessary distinction between the first and second persons (on which the distinction between them and the third person depends) be once set aside, any other distinction will either be a mere external denomination, in respect of offices or works, like the title of Creator and Redeemer, such as the Sabellians of old allowed, while they denied, that there was any real distinction of persons in the Godhead;——or such as will be inconsistent with the unity of the Divine nature, and implying a plurality of Gods, according to the heretical schemes of the ancient Arians and Macedonians.

It is not enough, to believe, that there is a distinction in the Deity. It is necessary also to believe, that this distinction lies in certain personal properties revealed in the holy Scriptures; namely, that it is the personal property of the Father to beget the Son, that of the Son to be begotten of the Father, and that of the

Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father and the Son. The manner of these personal properties is indeed inconceivable to us. But that there are such properties is a revealed truth, upon which our salvation depends. Nor is it any wonder, that a finite mind should be unable to comprehend the manner of that which is Infinite.

II. Some, who teach the doctrines of particular election, effectual calling and the perseverance of the saints, seem to waver in their adherence to that of particular redemption. Amesius and the other champions against the Arminians in the seventeenth century considered all these doctrines as inseparably connected. The Lord Jesus, would they say, *gave himself for the church; and laid down his life for the sheep.* But *the church, the sheep* of Christ do not comprehend all the individuals of mankind; but those only that were given to him by the Father, John x. 11, 29. Christ makes intercession for all those for whom he died. A priest under the law would have been deficient in the duty of his office, if he had not prayed for those for whom he offered the sacrifice of *a bull or goat.* And can we suppose that Christ will fail to pray for any of those for whom he offered *the sacrifice of himself?* But he says to the Father, *I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me,* John xvii. 9. Since, then, our Lord Jesus does not intercede, we may well conclude, that he did not lay down his life, for all the individuals of mankind. They for whom Christ died were objects of his love, of his distinguishing love, Ephes. v. 25. A love which will not suffer any of its objects to perish in their sins. The end of his death was, that they for whom he died, might obtain spiritual blessings; such as, pardon, Ephes. i. 7. peace with

God, Coloss. i. 20. adoption, Gal. iv. 4. sanctification, 1 Peter ii. 24. saving faith, Philip. i. 29. eternal life, Rom. v. 21. And therefore if Christ died for all the individuals of mankind, we must either suppose that they all, in the event, obtain these spiritual blessings; a supposition which is manifestly false; or we must suppose, that the death of Christ fails of obtaining its end; a thought which is inconsistent with the infinite merit of his death and with the infinite wisdom of God in the appointment of it. It is said, indeed, that Christ *died for all*, 2 Cor. v. 15. But who are *the all* here meant? They are those for whom *he also rose again*; who *live not to themselves, but to him*; who are *new creatures*; to whom the Lord *imputeth not their trespasses*; and *who are made the righteousness of God in Christ*, v. 15, 17, 19, 21. Again, who are *the all* for whom Christ is said to have tasted death in Heb. ii. 9.? They are called *many sons*, who are to be *brought to glory*; to whom Christ is *a captain of salvation*; who are *sanctified*; whom he calls his *brethren*, and *the children whom God hath given him*, v. 10, 11, 13. Thus the universal terms used with regard to the objects of Christ's death, are to be limited by what we find in the context, or in other scriptures relative to the same subject. Such universal terms are used concerning the death of Christ to signify the whole world of the redeemed, or all of every nation, kindred and language, who belong to the election of grace; and to intimate that God hath set him forth to be *a propitiation, through faith in his blood*, to sinners of every description.

Such was the plain language that the people were accustomed to hear in the reformed churches, agreeably to the judgment of the synod of Dort against the Arminian doctrine of universal redemption. But now

many public teachers, though they profess a general adherence to Calvinistick doctrine, are far from being explicit as to the article of particular redemption; and rather allow that Christ died, *in some sense*, for all men*: that is, if they mean any thing different from the doctrine of Amesius and other opposers of the Arminians, for all the individuals of mankind. Sometimes, this expression is used without any attempt to determine in what sense Christ died for all men; but sometimes explanations are offered, which are plainly erroneous.

It has been pretended, that this proposition, That Christ died intentionally for all men, is the ground of that appropriating faith, to which sinners are called under the gospel dispensation. But the falsehood of this opinion appears by considering that the only true ground of saving faith is the Divine Testimony, including a revelation of Jesus Christ, of his righteousness and salvation, and a free grant or promise of what is thus revealed, bearing such a general direction to the hearers of the word, as warrants each of them to take all home to himself. This Divine Testimony is that

* David Pareus observes that one person is said in scripture to die for another, 1. When he dies for the sake or for the good of another. In this sense Paul speaks of his suffering for the church, for the Corinthians or the Colossians, that is, for their benefit, or, as he sometimes expresses it, *for their consolation and salvation.* In the same sense, John says, We ought to *lay down our life for the brethren*, 1 John iii. 10. 2. When he dies in the room of another, to the end that that other may be saved from death, and have his life preserved. In this sense David wished, that he had died for his son Absolom. In this sense Paul speaks of one dying *for a righteous man*, Rom. v. 7. In this sense Christ the good Shepherd *laid down his life for the sheep*, John x. 11. In neither of these senses can it be said, that Christ died for those that perish in their unbelief. See an addition to Ursin's explanation of the XL. question of the Heidelberg Catechism.

which unbelief rejects, and which true faith builds upon for eternity. But the scheme of Christ's having died intentionally for all men affords no such ground of hope. For there is no hope of eternal life included in our relying upon a notion that Christ died intentionally for us no otherwise than for those that perish. Hence a person who takes up with this notion as the ground of his faith in the death of Christ, will be under the necessity of seeking some other ground than the death of Christ for his hope of eternal life; some ground for it in his exercises and feelings,—in his own righteousness. This scheme, therefore, leads men away from the gospel method of seeking *righteousness by faith* alone, to a carnal method of seeking it, *as it were, by the works of the law:* and thus *they stumble at that stumbling stone*, Rom. ix. 32.

It has also been said, that the common benefits granted to reprobates, as well as to the elect, such as food and raiment, the outward privileges of the visible church, the common operations of the Spirit, must be ranked among the benefits purchased by the death of Christ. But the scripture-account of the necessity of his death will not allow us to believe that it was appointed for the purchase of such things. The demands of vindictive justice upon the sinner, if they had obtained no answer from the Surety, would have been an effectual bar to the sinner's attainment of any spiritual blessing, such as, the pardon of sin or the renewing and sanctifying of our nature. For vindictive justice, in that case, would have necessarily required the sinner's exclusion from the special grace of God here, as well as everlasting punishment hereafter. So that no sinner could have attained any spiritual blessing, if Christ had not removed the bar arising from the demands of vin-

dictive justice by his satisfaction. But the case of temporal benefits granted to the wicked is quite different. For what vindictive justice necessarily requires is no bar to all the enjoyment, that wicked men attain, of these benefits; it being an enjoyment of them fully consistent with their exclusion from the special grace of God here, and with their everlasting punishment hereafter; nay, an enjoyment which belongs to the begun execution of God's wrath; for *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* Hence it is evident that the demands of vindictive justice were not a bar to men's attainment of temporal benefits, as they were to their attainment of spiritual blessings; and therefore the death of Christ was not necessary to procure the former, as it was to procure the latter. It is agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture to hold, that these benefits, as bestowed upon reprobates, proceed from the goodness and forbearance which God exercises in his common providence; and are allotted to them, as meat and drink are allowed a condemned malefactor, till the day of execution. For the same reasons, we cannot allow, that the outward privileges of the visible church or the common operations of the Spirit, as they are granted to the reprobate, are to be considered as fruits of Christ's purchase; though they are made subservient to the blessed design of his purchase; and though we allow that all the saving benefit, which is conveyed to the souls of believers through the outward means, and all the subserviency of the outward dispensations of providence to their salvation, are fruits of his purchase. Farther, the scripture teaches, that it is only in the way of union to the person of Christ, that any can enjoy the benefits of his purchase; and that whoever receives one of these benefits, shall, in the time and way settled in the covenant of grace, receive all; they are blessed in

Christ *with all spiritual blessings*, Ephes. i. 3. 1 Corin. i. 30. Rom. viii. 30. It is true, there are promises of the covenant of grace respecting the good things of this life. But what is secured to believers in these promises is not these things in their mere earthly nature, or as they are allowed to reprobates; but as they come attended with a special blessing and are subservient to the good of the soul. It may be useful to add here the following important words of Mr. Haliburton: "A "wise merchant," says he, "will not give pearls for "trifles; far less the only wise God this precious blood "for things of no or small value. Here, if any where, "the believer may see them, beyond all rational con- "tradiction, real, great, durable and eternal*."

* This principle, That nothing can be justly ascribed to the virtue of Christ's mediation, which might have taken place, consistently with the honour of God's law and justice, without that mediation,—is to be firmly maintained. So the scripture represents the exercise of God's mercy in pardoning sinners and receiving them into favour, as the fruit of Christ's mediation. But the acts of God's providence in preserving man and other creatures in being, and in ordering and disposing them in their natural course toward their natural ends, cannot be considered in that light. There is nothing suggested by reason or revealed in scripture concerning God, that would have hindered such acts of providence from being exercised, though no Mediator had been appointed. Ossiander, in the period of the blessed reformation from Popery, held, as some of the schoolmen had done before him, that Christ would have assumed the human nature, though man had not sinned. Others have taught, that Christ by his mediation obtained the confirmation of the angels or the continuance of the earth and its inhabitants in being, after the entrance of sin. These opinions proceed upon the supposition, that Christ might have been or was appointed to be a Mediator for other ends, than the glory of God in the salvation of elect sinners; a supposition without any foundation in the holy scriptures. *Scriptura*, says Turretine, *non alium finem proposuit missionis Christi, quam peccatorum salutem, nec fas est longius inquirere, tacente scriptura.*

It is a truth, that whatever the Divine election of some of mankind presupposes, the mediatorial office of Jesus Christ also presupposes: because his appointment to that office be-

One reason why so many professed Calvinists in our day deny or slight the doctrine of particular redemption, seems to be the neglect or misunderstanding of another precious doctrine of the gospel; the doctrine of Christ's representation of his people in the covenant of grace. Christ speaks frequently of *those that the Father had given him*, John vi. 37. x. 29. xvii. 6, 9, 24. who are called *his seed*, Isai. liii. 10. Christ put himself in their place, and condescended to bear their name, as in Isai. xlix. 3. *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* So in the first pro-

longs to or rather supposes the election of his people. But the election of some of mankind, in all their successive generations, presupposes the foreseen existence of all these generations: just as the act of the potter in taking so much clay of the same lump to make some vessels of one sort, and so much to make some of another sort, presupposes the existence of the whole lump. Therefore, since election presupposes the existence of mankind in their successive generations; so does the mediatorial office of Christ. His appointment to that office from everlasting supposed their decreed or foreseen existence; and his execution of it in time supposes their actual existence. But a thing cannot be the cause of that which it supposes as previous to itself. The actions of a man cannot be the cause of his life; since they suppose it as previous to them. Hence it is evident, that the mediatorial office of Christ cannot be the cause of men's natural existence; nor, according to the same reasoning, can it be the cause of any of the ordinary means of that existence, such as, food and raiment, natural and civil relations; because God's decree, or purpose of continuing men's natural life, includes his purpose of granting them all the requisite means of its continuance.

Objection. Was not man, as soon as he sinned, liable to immediate death, according to the threatening of the covenant of works.

Answer. Death, according to that threatening, was to take place on the day, on which he ate the forbidden fruit. But it does not follow, that it was *to end* on that day; for the death threatened was *eternal death*; even that which is *the wages of sin*, in direct opposition to that eternal life, which was promised in the first covenant as the reward of man's obedience, and which, according to the second, is *the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. Besides, as Adam represented

mise, both he and they are called *the seed of the woman*, Gen. iii. 15. In this respect, Adam is said to have been *a figure of him that was to come*, that is, of Christ, Rom. v. 14. In this sense, the apostle calls Adam the first man, and Christ *the last man*, 1 Corinth. xv. 47. each of them bearing such a publick character as never can be ascribed to any third man. As Adam's fall, by virtue of his representation, constituted all his natural posterity sinners; so the obedience of Jesus Christ, by virtue of his representation, constitutes all his people righteous. Particular redemption necessarily follows

all his natural offspring in the covenant of works; so, in consequence of his transgression, the death threatened was to reach the whole equally with himself, according to the tenor of that covenant, Gen. ii. 17. Rom. v. 12—19. 1 Corinth. xv. 21, 22. If annihilation had then taken place, the threatening could not have been executed upon Adam's offspring; nor the honour of the Divine faithfulness, pledged in that threatening, maintained. To say, that the mediation of Christ was necessary to preserve the human race in being, is to say, that his mediation was necessary in order to the execution of the threatening of the broken covenant; necessary to ensure the eternal damnation of sinners. The scripture gives us a very different account indeed of the end of Christ's mission, John iii. 17. *God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Objection. Christ the Mediator is said *to uphold all things*, Heb. i. 3 and *to establish the earth*, Isai. xlix. 8.

Answer. Christ, as being the same true God with the Father, is the Maker and Upholder of all things. He upholds them in their being, not by his mediation, but *by the word of his power*. He is the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS; exercising an absolute dominion, of both natural and moral government, over all persons and things in this world. Such is that necessary and essential kingdom, which belongs to him as God.

But he has also a Mediatory kingdom, which, as well as his essential kingdom, extends to all persons and things. This Mediatory kingdom or government is *given* to Christ, Matth. xxviii. 18. The great end, for which it was given to him, is in subordination to the glory of God, the good of his church, which is his spiritual kingdom, John xvii. 2. *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many*

from Christ's representation of those that were given him in the covenant of grace; for in Christ, as their representing Head, each of them, is considered as having given such a full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, as not only expiates all their sins, but entitles them to eternal life. Nor can he be said to have died for any more or fewer of mankind than his spiritual seed or those whom he represented, Isai. liii. 10, 11. They, and no others, were crucified, dead, and buried with him: they and no others are also risen with him and sit together with him in heavenly places.

as thou hast given him, Ephes. i. 22. *He gave him to be Head over all things to the church.* It is given him as the reward of his obedience unto death, Philip. ii. 8, 9, 10.

With regard to the expression in Isai. xlix. 8. *to establish the earth*, it is to be understood, agreeably to the connexion, of Christ's mediatory work in raising up and establishing his church, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. "He "shall repair," says Henry upon the place, "the decays of "the church and build it upon a rock. *He shall establish the "earth*, or rather, *the land*, the land of Judah, a type of the "church." Vitringa upon the place has these words: "Sayest "thou, the *earth* here signifies *the elect?* That I deny not; but "the desolate places signify the same thing. It is, therefore, "enquired what is to be understood by *the earth* and *the deso-"late heritages.* This prophet, if I mistake not, uses the same "phrase, in two other places, in describing the spiritual privi-"leges believers were to enjoy under the New Testament dis-"pensation." Chap. liv. 3. and lxi. 4. "In these places as well "as in this, you are to understand the prophet as representing "by this phrase the condition which the Gentiles were in for a "long time, while they were alienated from the communion of "God, grossly ignorant of God and true religion, and therefore "producing no spiritual fruit, pleasing to God, or profitable to "men, through their kingdoms, the hereditary possession of "which was promised to the seed of Abraham.—*To establish "the earth*, or *to raise up these desolate places*, is to bring these "Gentiles to the knowledge of the true religion by the doctrine "of the gospel, to implant in their minds the seeds of true "faith, piety and virtue, &c." The expositions of judicious commentators, collected in *Pool's Synopsis*, are much to the same purpose.

This doctrine must be preached to sinners. For, though it cannot be known, otherwise than by the event, what particular persons were included in Christ's representation, this being among the secret things that belong to the Lord our God; yet sinners must be taught, that there is such a relation between Christ and his chosen people; that, in the gospel, he is exhibited to them to be received and rested on by them as their New Covenant Head; and that, when they are determined *to appoint to themselves one Head*, as the expression is in Hos. i. 11. they thus manifest themselves to be among those whom Christ represented in the covenant of grace. Here it is to be carefully observed, that the preaching of the blessedness, attainable by sinners through the representation of the Lord Christ, includes or supposes the preaching of that sinful and miserable condition they are in through their connection with their first covenant Head; and of the necessity of their being cut off from that killing Head; and united to Jesus Christ, the new covenant-Head.

With regard to believers, the usefulness of this doctrine to them is too obvious to be insisted on. There are none of their distressed cases, in which this evangelical truth will not afford them strong consolation. Nor is there any part of Christian practice, to which it does not incite us by the most powerful motives and encouragements.

However much this doctrine of Christ's representation in the covenant of grace may be despised, that it was not so in the days of our forefathers is well known. The two following instances of their esteem of it deserve to be remembered. The one is in the

Memoirs of the life of Mr. Robert Blair; where he is giving an account of his ministry in the north of Ireland in the year 1630. "After sermon," says he, "on the Lord's day, one of the judges wanting to confer "with me, sent for me to his lodging, where he pro- "fessed his satisfaction with what I had delivered, es- "pecially in my last sermon: for therein said he, you "opened a point, which I never heard before, viz. the "covenant of redemption made with Christ the Me- "diator as Head of the elect. He intreated me to "go over the heads of the sermon with him. And "opening his Bible, he read over and considerd the "proofs cited: and he was so well satisfied, that, if his "calling did not tie him to Dublin, he would gladly "come to the North, and settle under such a ministry." The other instance is in Mr. Robert Trail's Vindication of the Protestant doctrine concerning justification from the charge of Antinomianism, where he has the following words: "No other Headship to Christ "do we find some willing to admit but what belongs "to his kingly office. As to his Suretyship and be- "ing the second Adam, and a publick Person, some "treat it with contempt. I have heard, that Dr. "Thomas Goodwin was in his youth an Arminian, "or at least inclining that way; but was, through the "Lord's grace, brought off by Dr. Sibbs clearing up this "same point of Christ's being the Head and Repre- "sentative of all his people."

III. Some who profess to teach Calvinistick doctrine, have offered such explanations of the inability of fallen man to do what is spiritually good as appear to deviate from the principles of the reformation. The common objection of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians is to this purpose: "To suppose that God commands

" what we have no ability to perform, is to represent " him as unjust. We cannot be under a moral obliga- " tion to do what is not in our power." In answer to this objection our old divines commonly observed, that, though God could not, consistently with his justice and goodness, require of man any obedience, which he had not ability, in the state wherein he was created, to perform; yet, when man by the fall had wilfully thrown away that ability, God did not thereby lose his right of requiring obedience*. But this answer is now deemed insufficient. Our new divines pretend that the objection is better answered, by distinguishing between natural and moral ability; alleging, that men, in their fallen state, have still a *natural* ability to believe in Christ, to repent of sin, and to perform every other duty acceptably; but have no *moral* ability to do so. On this point it may be useful to offer a few observations.

1. There are indispositions and inabilities of body and mind, which are not, in themselves, contrary to the holy law of God; such as the inability of an idiot to acquire knowledge, the inability of the blind to read the scriptures, the inability of the heathens to comply with the offers of salvation, which they never heard. Such inabilities may be called *physical* or *natural*: they are not, in themselves, contrary to the holy law of God, which, by no means, requires what is thus physically impossible. We are far from saying, that the inability of fallen man to do what is spiritually good, is *natural* in this sense: for every one must allow the inability

* Frustra se opponunt Pelagiani et Semi-Pelagiani omnes; objicientes, Deum sic in mandatis fore injustum, et hominem in peccatis excusabilem. Respondetur, neutrum sequi, quia impotentia hominis est culpabilis, et voluntarie contracta, per quam Deus jure suo non excidit. Marckii Medulla, capite xx.

of those who are grown up and have the exercise of reason, to know their Creator aright, and to love him above all things, according to the external revelation which is actually made to them in his works, and especially in his word, to be of a quite different kind from the inabilities just now mentioned. This inability, considered as, in itself, contrary to the holy law of God, may rightly be called *moral* inability. But it may also be justly called *natural*, as the whole nature of man is subjected to it; as it is the want of that original righteousness, which was natural to man, till he lost it by the fall; as it is so absolute, that no man, before a change of nature in saving conversion, can exert a single act spiritually good; *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart being only evil continually*. Thus, though we allow, that the unregenerate man's inability to believe in Christ is moral and voluntary, so that he alone is the blameable cause of it; yet it cannot be justly called *moral* in opposition to *natural*, as now explained; or, as if the act of the will in refusing to close with the gospel-offer, were the only bar or hindrance to his attainment of saving faith; for that act itself is hindered *negatively*, by the want of that supernatural grace, which being imparted, saving faith necessarily follows, and which being withheld, it is impossible: and *positively*, not only by the will, but also by the corruption of the whole nature, by which the will in the unregenerate is so completely enslaved, so bound as with a chain, that it can do nothing towards its own deliverance*.

* Licet dubium non sit, impotentiam istam voluntariam esse et culpabilem, ut nemini nisi homini soli ejus causa adscribenda sit. Non potest tamen dici absoluta, solam hominis voluntatem prohibere quo minis credat, quia, ut *negative* id quoque prohibet carentia et privatio gratiæ, qua posita crederet, et sine qua impossibile est eum credere: ita *positive* id prohibet etiam, non simpliciter ejus voluntas, sed nativa ista corruptio,

2. If the spiritual impotence, which man has contracted by the fall, be no more than the want of inclination or willingness to do what is spiritually good; then it is no more than such inability as that of a man in perfect health to go out of his house; or that of a good scholar to write, when he has no inclination to do so. As it would be manifestly absurd to express the want of inclination in these cases by saying, he *cannot* go out of his house, he *cannot* write; so if the spiritual impotence of fallen man were no more than what is now represented, it would be no less absurd, to say, as the scripture does, He *cannot* come to Christ, he *cannot* please God; he has *no strength, no life in him**. Upon that supposition, there would appear to be no room for the apostle's distinction between being *actually not subject* to the law of God, and being *utterly incapable* of subjection to it; and between God's *working in us to will* and *his working in us to do*†.

3. It is much to be observed, that, according to the Scripture, man's spiritual impotence lies in the understanding as well as in the will, 1 Corinth. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* If it be said, that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man, because he wilfully misrepresents them; no, says the apostle, it is because *he cannot know them*: and farther, if it be said, that it is only from his inattention, that he cannot know

quæ voluntatem inflecit, et qua, veluti catena spirituali, peccator ita mancipatur, ut illam ex se & suis viribus sine gratia abrumpere et excutere nunquam possit.
Turretini Institutionis, Loco decimo, Quæstione iv ta. Th. 40.

* John vi. 44, 53. Rom. v. 6. viii. 8.
† Rom. viii. 7. Philip. ii. 13.

them; the apostle answers, that this inability cannot be remedied by any efforts of the natural man but only by the supernatural illumination of the Holy Spirit: *they are discerned spiritually*, by that new capacity of understanding which is given us by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. To this purpose is that which Moses said to Israel towards the end of the forty years during which they sojourned in the wilderness, *The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.* It ts true, that wisdom and knowledge are often in scripture to be understood practically, as including the will's approbation of and delight in the object known; as in Job. xxviii. 28. *Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* But in such passages the understanding is undoubtedly commended as directing the will to depart from sin and adhere to the path of duty, a holy practice being both the effect and evidence of a savingly enlightened understanding.

4. It is a dangerous error to say, "That if men "are unable to understand, believe and love the gospel "in a saving manner, then they must be unable to shut "their eyes against it, to disbelieve and reject it." For, according to the scripture, men's natural inability to perform any duty, instead of rendering them unable to practice the contrary sin, disposes them to practise it more and more. Thus, the more unable men are to discern the truth in a saving manner, the more do they shut their eyes and ears against it. The Jews, in the time of our Saviour and his apostles, were unable to understand, believe and love the gospel in a saving manner, not only from the common depravation of human nature, but also from a peculiar efficacy of God's righteous judgment upon them, John xii. 38, 39, 40.

Rom. xi. 7, 8, 9, 10. Did it follow, that they were unable to shut their eyes against, to disbelieve and reject the gospel? Quite the contrary; for by means of that judicial induration, their opposition to the gospel was increased, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost. The defenders of the doctrine of grace against the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians have shewn abundantly, that, in order to justify God in condemning fallen men for their unbelief and other sins, it is by no means necessary to suppose, that they have still, in their fallen state, sufficient ability to perform the opposite duties in an acceptable manner.

If it be asked, how can men, who are unable of themselves to believe in Jesus Christ, be justly condemned upon this ground, that they had ability and lost it in the first Adam; since Adam himself, in his upright state, could not be said to have had faith in Jesus Christ; We answer, that the law, which was written upon man's heart in his creation, bound him to believe whatever God reveals. But the general duty of believing whatever God reveals, comprehends the more particular duty of believing the gospel upon the proposal of it: and by whatever means we lost ability for the former belief, by the same means we lost ability for the latter.

If it be said, that sinners are hereby rendered secure by fixing the guilt of their conduct upon their father Adam. We answer, that, while men are not brought to humble themselves for their sin in Adam, they are not duly exercised in humbling themselves for any other sin. The doctrine of man's natural inability to do what is spiritually good, is only abused,—when persons make it a pretence for their slight thoughts of

actual sins ;—when they are not filled with a self-abasing sense of their helpless and lost condition; and when they are not thus excited to look for all their salvation in Jesus Christ as exhibited in the gospel. Besides, when sinners are hardening themselves in their pernicious courses; though they may occasionally attempt to excuse themselves from the doctrine of man's natural impotence; yet they give sufficient evidence that they disbelieve it, by the large promises of repentance and reformation, which they usually make when under convictions; and by their delaying the work of turning from sin to God, as if it were a work which they have sufficient ability for doing at any time. The truth is, the case of natural men under the gospel-dispensation is like that of a servant, who, while he labours under a disease that renders him incapable of serving his master, has, at the same time, such an aversion to the service, that, rather than return to it, he chooses to continue under his disease. Unrenewed men are totally impotent as to any act that is, spiritually good; and they have a reigning enmity against the only remedy of their impotence.

To what has now been observed on this point, it may be of use to add a quotation from a valuable writer, whose praise is in the churches*. "The learned Amyraldus," says he, "did no service to the cause of "the reformation by his distinction between a physical "and a moral power of believing in Christ. He supposed the sinner to have the former, but not the latter. He held, that Christ died for all men according "to a decree of God, by which salvation was secured

* Leydecker de Veritate Religionis Reformatæ et Evangelicæ, Lib. ii. Chap. 6. Sect. 82.

" to sinners upon condition of their faith; which gen-
" eral decree, according to him, was to be considered
" as going before the particular decree, about giving
" faith to the elect. When it was objected to him, that
" his notion of the general decree now mentioned was
" absurd, as it suspended the end of Christ's death up-
" on an impossible condition;—he denied, that the con-
" dition was impossible. *For*, said he, *though I do not,*
" *with the Arminians, deny the impotence of fallen man, or*
" *his inability to believe, (I allow him to be morally im-*
" *potent;) yet I hold that man has still a physical or na-*
" *tural power of believing; as he possesses the natural*
" *faculties of the understanding and the will.* Herein
" Amyraldus has given a sad example of the abuse of
" great parts. Shall we suppose, that when Christ
" undertook for sinners in the covenant of grace, he
" considered them any otherwise than as most misera-
" ble, lost, dead in sin, utterly impotent, Rom. v. 7,
" 8. viii. 3. or that the wisdom of God gave Christ
" to die for this end, that sinners might attain salvation
" by a natural power of believing; a power, which,
" Amyraldus confesses, could never be exerted? Far-
" ther, is not faith a most holy and moral act, and, as
" it takes place in the sinner, purely supernatural? and
" shall we allow, that a principle which is not moral,
" but merely physical, can be productive of such a mo-
" ral and supernatural act? Ought not an act and its
" principle to correspond with one another? Let the
" same thing be said of love, which Amyraldus has
" said of faith, and the Pelagians will triumph; who
" used to speak so much about a natural faculty of
" loving God above all things. Indeed upon this
" scheme, there will be no keeping out of the Pela-
" gian opinion about the powers of *pure nature*, and
" about *physical or natural faculties in man of doing what*

is morally good. For, in confuting that opinion, our "Divines still maintained, that the image of God was "requisite in the first man, in order to his exerting "such morally good acts as those of loving and seek- "ing true blessedness in the enjoyment of him. But "Amyraldus overthrows this doctrine, while he is led, "by the distinction he makes between natural and mor- "al power, to hold, that the conception of man's ra- "tional nature necessarily includes in it a power of "exerting acts morally good, such as those of desiring "and endeavouring to obtain the restoration of com- "munion with the infinitely holy and blessed God. "The tendency of this scheme became more manifest, "when Pajonius, a disciple of Amyraldus, began to "deny the necessity of the Spirit's work in the inter- "nal illumination of sinners, in order to their saving "conversion. For, said Pajonius, nothing more is ne- "cessary to that end, than that the understanding, "which has in itself a sufficiency of clear ideas, (ac- "cording to the language of the Cartesian Philosophy "then in vogue,) should only be struck by the light of "external revelation, as the eye is struck by the rays "of light coming from a luminous object."

This quotation may lead to useful reflections on the connexion between the opinion before mentioned and several other errors which have been broached, in opposition to the purity of gospel doctrine.

IV. Another instance of defection from the doctrine of the reformation is, that many professing, in other respects, to hold Calvinistick doctrine, teach that such a knowledge of God is attainable by means of the works of creation and common Providence, together with tradition, as is sufficient for the salvation

of the heathens, if they were sincere in the improvement of that knowledge. This opinion is directly opposite to those scriptures, which represent the heathens, before the gospel was preached to them, as without God and without hope in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. as in such a state, that whatever wisdom they attained by tradition or otherwise, *they knew not God*, 1 Corinth. i. 21. Any knowledge of God, which they could attain in that state, was of no avail for their salvation; as it was a knowledge of him only according to the law or covenant of works. For the apostle shews abundantly, that no justification or salvation is attainable by the law, Rom. iii. 20. viii. 3. Gal. iii. 10, 18, 21. iv. 24. Ephes. ii. 8, 9. Their knowledge of God, while in that state, included no knowledge of the only Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; no knowledge of the promises of God as yea and amen in him. Thus, they were ignorant of the only ground of hope ever revealed to sinners. Besides, the knowledge, attainable by heathens without the word, has no promise of being blessed to fallen men as a means of removing their natural blindness and enmity; nor can it be certainly shewn, that it has ever had such an effect. The whole history of the heathen world evinces the unprofitableness of their knowledge of God for producing either true holiness or true comfort*.

Such tenets, as we have now considered, are taught by many who profess a general adherence to the doctrine exhibited in the confession of the Reformed Churches; while the avowed oppositions of others to that doctrine is verging to the Pelagian and Socinian extremes.

* See Haliburton's Principles of the Modern Deists, Chap. x. Sect. 3d.

With regard to the primary causes of such defection from the faith and profession of evangelical truth, they are the same in all ages and countries, namely, the opposition of man's depraved nature to the things of the spirit of God and his inability to apprehend these things aright without supernatural illumination; together with the unwearied attempts of Satan to seduce men from the truth and entangle them in pernicious errors. But there are secondary causes or occasions of this defection, which are, at least in the remarkable prevalence of them, peculiar to the state of the church in certain periods or places of the world. It is the design of the remaining part of this letter to take notice of some such causes or occasions of the present decline from the doctrine of the reformation.

First, it has been often observed, that, during a long continuance of outward peace, a church seldom retains her first purity; she contracts corruption insensibly, as iron, not used, gathers rust. The truths of the gospel were taught in their native simplicity, while professors were exposed to suffering on account of their faithful adherence to them. But after some time of ease and prosperity in the Protestant churches, various tenets began to be advanced in opposition to the doctrine of our Reformers; such as, That the gospel is a new law; that the act of saving faith includes no persuasion, that Christ is a Saviour to us in particular; that what had been held by orthodox divines about a specifick difference between saving grace and the greatest attainments of natural men, was false and hurtful to the souls of men; That the union of believers to Christ can mean nothing but their adherence to him by love and obedience; That God hath promised saving grace to such a diligent use of the appointed means, as men

in their natural state are capable of attaining. It was a very different sort of doctrine which the Lord blessed for the support and consolation of his people in suffering times. We refer to the letters and discourses of the Martyrs in England during the reigns of King Henry the eighth and Queen Mary, and Patrick Hamilton's Determinations concerning the law, the gospel, and faith*, and in general to the first Confessions of the Protestant churches.

The acknowledged improvements of the present age in politicks, in natural philosophy and other sciences, lead many to suppose that the fashionable opinions in religion must be more correct than those of our old reformers. But it is certain, that when people grow more knowing in worldly things, they often grow more ignorant of the things of the spirit of God. Those things are often hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes, Matth. xi. 25. Besides, we are apt to suppose, that we see farther than our predecessors, because we enjoy the fruit of their labours and stand upon their shoulders: the old Popish schoolmen might have the like thoughts of the ancient fathers. But the use of such reasoning about our knowledge of the things of God may be very fallacious. For we may not be able to see so far in these matters as our predecessors, if they were better enlightened by the spirit of God to understand the mystery of the gospel.

Secondly, another thing, which contributes to the decline of the knowledge and esteem of reformation-principles, is a prevailing prejudice among the teachers and students in Divinity against one of the best means,

* See Fox's Martyrology, and Knox's history of the Reformation of religion in Scotland.

in due subordination to the holy scriptures, of an accurate understanding of these principles; namely, the use of the systems of Christian doctrine delivered by our first Reformers and their successors. In these systems the leading truths of our holy religion are distinctly stated in such an order as exhibits their connexion with, and dependance upon, one another. Some object to these systems, that there is nothing in them but short hints on many questions, which admit of a much larger discussion. But it is not the design of such compends to handle those questions at large, but to state in few words the particulars that are most necessary to be attended to in order to a just determination of them. These particulars, however, are, with few exceptions, so judiciously related and arranged, and so clearly proved by the texts of scripture quoted, that to an attentive mind, disposed to meditation, no human writings are more helpful. Some complain of the scholastick terms used in these systems. But several of them, such as Calvin's Institutions, are not at all liable to this objection. Others, such as Altingius, Maccovius, Turretine, make use of some scholastick terms, with manifest advantage; for when these terms are understood, (and it requires but a little trouble to understand them,) we are convinced that hardly any other terms could be found, in which the writer could have conveyed his meaning with equal brevity and precision. "Laboured and prolix dissertations," as a judicious writer observes, "are far from being so helpful to the memory and often tend to give a wrong "bias to the judgment, by keeping the mind too long "intent on one particular head of doctrine; whence it "is often diverted from the consideration of another "equally necessary to be known, and kept from having

" a just view of the connexion between one truth and
" another; by not attending to which men frequently
" fall into the shameful inconsistency of setting one
" part of revealed truth in opposition to another. The
" method of teaching by such prolix dissertations
" seems indeed well calculated for propagating error
" and false doctrine; as it affords the teachers of it an
" opportunity of using various artifices for concealing,
" colouring over, and insinuating with advantage and
" success, notions and opinions, the falsehood, folly
" and absurdity of which would appear at first view,
" were they set forth in a plain simple dress, or put
" into the form of systematick treatises*."

Thirdly, the decline of purity in doctrine appears to be promoted by the fashionable mode of preaching in our day. In former times, when a Protestant minister had laid down a doctrine or position, he would immediately establish it by quoting one or two texts of scripture. Even in pathetick addresses to the people, as well as in confirming points of doctrine, ministers made use of such quotations, as the most effectual means, through the Divine blessing, not only of enlightening the judgment, but also of awakening the conscience and reaching the heart. The sermon of an old Protestant minister was just a series of particulars, deduced from his text, each of which particulars was confirmed by one or more pertinent texts, and applied to the particular cases of his hearers. But in our day, we read and hear many sermons in which, though many passages of scripture may be repeated, we are never once referred to any passage as the ground of our faith

* See that valuable work of the late Rev. Mr. David Wilson, entitled Palemon's Creed examined.

in what is delivered†. It is true, the preacher does not fail to give reasons for what he advances; and the reasons may often be solid; but then they are given, as if they had been derived from no other source than the common reason and experience of mankind. By this

† It is not meant by any thing here advanced, that ministers should not make use of reasoning in their sermons: for that would be to say, upon the matter, that they should not deal with their hearers as rational creatures at all. Reasoning is continually necessary,—particularly, in discovering what is necessarily implied in the words of scripture, or justly deducible from them; in confirming the doctrine we find to be contained in any text from the antecedents and consequents of that text, and from the comparison of it with other places of scripture; in shewing the agreement of one revealed truth with another, and its inconsistency with error. Besides, it is often proper for ministers first to shew their hearers, that such a particular revealed in the word, as a matter of faith or practice, is agreeable to the remains of light in their natural reason; and then to urge that agreement upon them, as a motive to their cordial reception of what God has revealed, and as rendering the crime of rejecting it more heinous and inexcusable. But the fashionable mode of reasoning in the pulpit, which this passage points out as reprehensible, is the inculcating matters of faith or practice upon the ground of their agreement with the dictates of men's natural reason; while the scripture is not referred to, or at least not as the only ground upon which the hearers are to receive the doctrine delivered. For no doctrine is received by a Divine faith, or will be effectual to any saving purpose, unless it be received as the word of God, 1 Thessal. ii. 13. 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15, 16. and apprehended by the saving illumination of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinth. ii. 14. Matth. xvi. 17. The manner of preaching here censured has a manifest tendency to corrupt not only the more mysterious doctrines, such as those relating to the sacred Trinity and to the union of the two natures in the person of Christ: but even the most plain and practical doctrine: as it is a method which diverts the attention from Jesus Christ the centre and sum of them all; and from the necessary connexion of each of them with the rest, even with the most mysterious, as being all parts of the same *truth as it is in Jesus*. This manner of preaching seems to be that which made the excellent Mr. Haliburton apprehensive of a sort of rational religion coming in among the Protestants in his time; whence people would fall into a way of serving God, which is mere Deism, having no relation to Christ Jesus and the Spirit of God.

method men's attention is turned away from the consideration of the word as the word of God, or as the means of his appointment for our conversion and sanctification: under which consideration alone we are to expect that God will bless and make the truths delivered effectual to these salutary ends. Besides, when people are accustomed to receive doctrines upon the ground of their own reason, without any reference to the authority of God speaking in the scriptures; their natural prejudice against receiving the mysteries of the gospel upon the ground of that authority alone, is countenanced and increased; and they are prepared to imbibe any corrupt opinion, when recommended to them by some plausible reasoning.

Fourthly, the fashionable systems of philosophy have contributed much to the present defection from the doctrines of the reformation. It is generally allowed, that even in the first three centuries, many were chargeable with corrupting the doctrines of the Christian religion by mixing them with the opinions of the Platonick philosophy; a scheme, which gave birth to the Gnosticks, the Valentinians and other heretics, in that early period. Thus, many professors are obstinately attached to the false tenets which they have learned from the modern systems of philosophy: systems, which represent the doctrines of God's eternity without succession, his omnipresence without extension as unintelligible jargon; which describe the powers of human nature in a manner inconsistent with its present fallen state; which hold the nature of things, men's feelings, or something else than the revealed will of God to be the standard of moral virtue; which reduce the evil of sin to a light and trivial matter, by calling it a human frailty or imperfection, of little account in

the eye of the Deity; and which allow us no other ground for the faith of what is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, than human reason or human testimony. We would not detract from the praise due to sound philosophy, which teaches to study distinctness in our conceptions of these things and accuracy in reasoning about them; and which by its discoveries heightens our views of the wisdom, power and goodness of God in his works, and promotes the conveniency and comfort of human life. Philosophy may be also a handmaid to faith. But, in order to be useful in this respect, it must be duly subordinate to the authority of Divine revelation*.

* Habuit se ad Theologiam philosophia in scholis quorundam saltem Patrum, ut *socia*; in gymnasiis scholasticorum, ut *domina*: in reformatorum cathedris, ut *ancilla*: That is, Philosophy was to Theology in the schools of the Fathers, a sister or equal; in the disputations of the Schoolmen, a mistress or superior; but in the seminaries of the Reformed churches, only a handmaid. To this observation of Dr. Arrowsmith, an eminent Divine of the seventeenth century, may be added some remarks of the celebrated Voetius, a contemporary writer. Vide Disput. de Errore et Hæresi. In the epistle to the Coloss. ii. 8. Christians are warned of the danger they are in of being *spoiled*, or made a prey of, *through philosophy*. But then it is such philosophy as is but *vain deceit*. It is not that philosophy, which God himself teaches, as he is the Author of nature and of right reason. The apostle here intends those false opinions and sects of philosophers, which, being too much followed and admired by many professors of Christianity, were a principal cause of their departure from the truth. Thus he condemns *endless*, vain or fabulous *genealogies*, 1 Tim. i. 4. *Science falsely so called*, 1 Tim. vi. 20. false revelations, 2 Thessal. ii. 2. and gaudy or sophistical eloquence, 1 Corinth. ii. 1, 4. but not the genealogies we have recorded in scripture, nor any true science, revelation, or eloquence. Here the maxim holds, That the abuse of a thing may be taken away, without taking away the thing itself or its use. It is true, some positions, usually admitted as axioms by Philosophers in treating of natural things, seem repugnant to the mysteries of faith, such as, *That nothing is made of nothing*, and *that a power or habit, totally destroyed, cannot be restored*. But we justly allow, that these axioms hold true of second causes, operating according to the ordinary

Fifthly, the decline of stedfast adherence to the doctrine of the reformation has been promoted by lax

course of nature. And we no more deny the necessity and usefulness of them within their own sphere, when we say, that they are not to be applied to matters of faith, which cannot be known but by supernatural revelation; than we deny that the manner of knowing external objects by means of our bodily senses is useful and necessary in the present state; when we say, that that manner of knowing is not to be extended to objects purely intellectual; an abuse, which has led some to hold, that pure spirits and even the Divine Essence may be seen with the bodily eye.

True philosophy ministers, as an handmaid; to the Christian religion, not only as it teaches us to handle every subject with accuracy and precission; and as the knowledge, thereby attained, helps us to make use of natural things, by way of comparison or similitude, for the illustration of spiritual things: but especially as it serves to expose the vain pretensions of a false philosophy, by which many labour insidiously to undermine the foundations of our faith.

Men are apt to run into an extreme, either in magnifying or in depreciating the use of philosophy, from their obstinate attachment to favourite errors. When the Metaphysicks of Suarez, a Popish writer, were published, the Arminians read them with great avidity, and were continually extolling and repeating the subtilties of that author about the *scientia media*, free will, sufficient grace, and the like topicks, relative to the opinions which they themselves maintained in opposition to the doctrine of the reformed churches. But when the judicious defenders of that doctrine had sufficiently exposed the false Metaphysicks of Suarez; the Arminians changed their note; and exclaimed, that their opponents were forsaking the simplicity of Christian doctrine, and dealing in the jargon of Metaphysicks, in the quiddities and hicceities of Aristotle. Meanwhile, their own controversial writings abounded with metaphysical notions and distinctions, which, as employed in support of their peculiar tenets, were either false or misapplied. It was a stratagem, to induce the Calvinistick writers to make no more use of metaphysical reasoning, which the Arminians, had found too solid to be refuted; in order that their own false metaphysicks, which they obtruded upon the world for true philosophy, might pass unexamined The apostate emperor Julian used a similar artifice in forbidding the Christians to be instructed in the Grecian literature; because he found that by means of it they were enabled to expose the vain pretences upon which he and his philosophers attempted to palliate the enormous wickedness of the Pagan idolatry.

schemes of church-communion. There is no particular church which has not some articles of revealed truth, which have been solemnly acknowledged as belonging to her profession and to the bond of her communion. When the office-bearers of a particular church admit the known deniers and opposers of such articles, they are chargeable with gross dishonesty, and with a flagrant contempt of the charge, that Christ hath given his people, to hold fast what they have attained. It is a vain excuse, that the truths denied are less fundamental; while they belong to the bond of the church's communion; while they bear the same stamp of Divine authority with those which are deemed more fundamental; and while there is such a connexion among the truths revealed in God's word, that the denial of the less fundamental leads to the denial of those which are more so; and while the authority of God speaking in his word may be no less despised by the denial of the former, than by that of the latter. Thus the Papists trample as much upon his authority in withholding the cup from the people in the Lord's Supper, as in denying the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers for their justification. For though the matter of duty rejected in the former case may be deemed less important, it is no less clearly revealed than the matter of faith denied in the latter. Besides, they who hold the grossest errors, will often profess adherence to the essentials of Christianity, and will make frequent use of the very expressions of scripture, which plainly contain the truths which they obstinately deny. A Socinian will say, I believe in the Holy Spirit; but then he adds, that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but only an attribute or operation of the Deity. Again, I believe, says he, the resurrection of the body; adding,

however, that he does not mean the resurrection of the same body. An Arminian will say, there is an election, of Christians to salvation; but then it is such an election, that the execution of it is suspended upon man's free-will by which it may be frustrated. Thus persons may profess adherence to the essensials of Christianity, and to many scriptural propositions expressing the articles of our faith; and yet they could not be *honestly* admitted to church-communion by the office-bearers of the reformed churches; while they are well known to understand the said propositions in a heretical sense; and to deny the truth really contained in them. That such admissions, however, often take place in the Protestant churches at this day, is too evident, from the prevailing contempt of Confessions of Faith*; from the loose casuistry of many about the

* The practise of the Protestant churches in requiring their ministers and other members to make a solemn profession of adherence to their publick Formulas or confessions of faith is warranted by all those passages of scripture in which we are enjoined to *confess Christ before men; to hold fast the form of sound words; to contend earnestl for the faith once delivered to the saints; to strive together with one mind for the faith of the gospel.* It is, indeed necessary to contend for the words of the scripture as the very words of God. But this is not enough. For many, who, in profession, hold the words of scripture, wrest them to their own destruction, 1 Peter iii. 16. In the time of Christ and his apostles, the Sadducees and the Judaizing teachers professed their belief of the Old Testament scriptures; whilst in various points they denied the true sense of these scriptures. Thus, our Lord maintained not only the words which God spoke to Moses out of the bush, but also the true sense of these words in opposition to the error of the Sadducees, Luke xx. 37, 38l In like manner, the apostle Paul declares the sense of various words of the Old Testament in opposition to the legal doctrine of the Judaizing teachers, Gal. 8, 11, 16, 21, 22. Now as there were false teachers and hereticks in the times of the apostles, so our Lord warned us of the rise and spread of such in the last times, 2 Tim. iii. 1. iv. 3, 4, 1 Corinth. xi. 19. 1 John iv. 3. 2 Peter ii. 1. Such, in the present day, are the Socinians, the Arminians and others: and it is the duty of

conduct of those who subscribe articles of the church's faith contrary to their own faith; and from divers and strange doctrines daily propagated in these churches by the pulpit and press. While this laxness continues; we need not be surprised at the decline of the reformation cause with regard to purity of doctrine.

Lastly, as men's ignorance and denial of the genuine doctrines of the gospel tend to the ruin of vital piety; so, on the other hand, the decay of vital piety is attended with indifference and heart-aversion to these doctrines. They have no certain hold of the truths of the gospel, who have not received them in faith and love, and have no gracious experience of their sanctifying influence on the heart and life. When there is little exercise of believing prayer for the Spirit of truth, who guides us into the saving knowledge of all gospel-

Christians to maintain the truths of God denied by these hereticks, and to testify against their errors and blasphemies. Christians ought to do so, not only as individuals, but as a church; for the maintaining of Divine truth is one principal end of their visible union in that capacity. In this respect the church may be called *the pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Timothy iii. 15. But a particular church cannot discharge her duty in this respect without declaring her adherence not only to *the words*, but also to *the true sense* of scripture; which is denied by these hereticks. And such is the declaration which is made by a particular church in her Formula, Confession of Faith, or Judicial Testimony. Besides, who can deny, that such a plain and distinct representation of the first principles and leading doctrines of the Christian religion, as is made in the Catechisms and Confession of Faith compiled by the Westminster Assembly, must be of great use to the generality of Christians? In every church, not only children, but many others, have need of such means of instruction in *the first principles of the oracles of God*. Nay, we have examples of such compositions in the summaries which the scripture itself gives us of our holy religion; such as, the ten commandments, what is commonly called, the Lord's prayer, and various other passages, such as Matth. xxii. 37, 38, 39. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. vi. 1. Acts xx. 21.

truth; when professors are puffed up with the conceit of their own wisdom; when their eagerness in the pursuit of worldly things allows them no leisure for composed meditation on the truths of the gospel; when all seek their own things, not the things of Christ; when iniquity abounds and the love of many waxeth cold; the reformed churches, while such is the ruling character of their members, must be on the decline with regard to the purity of gospel doctrine.

But amidst all the evils of the times, there are still some comfortable signs, which give us ground to hope, that he who keeps the truth, will, in due time, make it prevail over all opposition. He continues his word and ordinances with us. He takes occasion from the opposition made to the various articles of his truth, to make the evidence, the necessity and importance of these articles, shine with more conspicuous lustre. The sword of the civil magistrate being no more abused, as formerly, in the persecution of Christ's witnesses; they are not afraid to lift up their voice in defence of his truths. They who explore the remote parts of the earth in pursuit of science or of gain, and who thus render the intercourse of the nations with one another more general and extensive, are employed (though they have no such design) by Divine providence, in preparing a way for the propagation of the gospel, and for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. It seems, indeed, that the church has to go through some severe trial before a thorough reformation. Hence he gives his people that call in Isai. xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* But a blessed rem-

nant shall be preserved, Zechar. xiii. 9. *I will bring a third part through the fire and will refine them, as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.* We have also ground to expect that, on the other side of these calamities, the condition of the church will be better than it has been since the days of the apostles. The beauty of purity and power in her profession and ordinances; the beauty of unity among her members will then be attained in an eminent degree, Isai. xxx. 26. *The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.*

P. S. The truth concerning the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ, is stated in the preceding letter, but as this important doctrine meets with much opposition, it seems not improper to add the following extract from a discourse on that subject.

We propose first to state, in some particulars, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son; and Secondly, to confirm the truth of it.

1. Human generation bears some sort of analogy to and is some shadow of the eternal generation of the Son of God. The son amongst men is of the same nature with the father and bears his image or likeness. So the eternal Son is of the same nature with the eternal Father: he is *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person.* But,

2. There is an infinite disproportion and difference between the Divine generation of the Son and human generation. By human generation the Father and the Son, though of the same specific nature, are two beings. But by this Divine generation, the Father and the Son are of the same numerical nature, or, in other

words, they are one being. Hence, whilst a father and his son among men have different endowments, the excellencies and perfections of the Divine Father and his Son are necessarily the same.——By human generation, the son exists separately from his father and without his father: but in the Godhead, though the Son be a distinct person from the Father; yet he has no subsistence without the Father. Hence it is said of these Divine Persons, (what cannot be said of a human father and his son) that the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father; and that he who *hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father.* No human son can say to his father what Christ says to his Father, *All things that are mine are thine, and that are thine are mine**. Human generation is temporal; the father is in time before the son, and begets one younger than himself. But the Divine generation of the Son is eternal. For the generation of the Son is the eternal act of the eternal Father; both co-existing eternally in the same individual essence. The generation of the son amongst men is contingent: an event that may or may not be. But the generation of the Son of God is as necessary as the being of God. For it is as necessary for God to be whatever he is, as it is for him to be at all. Thus though there be some faint analogy between the Divine generation of the Son and human generation, yet we are by no means to admit that the former is properly comparable with the latter; as the Divine perfections are not properly to be compared with any shadows of them among creatures. Isai. xlvi. 5. *To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal or compare me, that we may be like?* And yet it may be justly said, that the generation of the Son of God is the most proper and perfect generation; in regard that he, *the express image* of the Father's *Person*, being the same Divine being with the Father.

3. The generation of the Son does not imply any inequality to the Father. For, according to this generation, the Father and the Son possess the same indi-

* John xvii. 10. So the Greek words may be most properly rendered.

vidual Godhead or Divine nature; and they possess it eternally: so that there can be no priority of the Father to the Son.

4. The Divine essence is neither the principle nor the term of this generation. It is not *the principle*, or that which begets; for that is the person, as such, of the Father: nor is it *the term*, or that which is begotten; for that is the person, as such, of the Son. Hence our saying, that the Lord Christ, considered as the Son, is not of himself, but of the Father; consists well with our saying, that he is God of himself. He is of the same necessarily existent, underived, independent, absolutely eternal Godhead with the Father.

5. The manner of this eternal generation is to us absolutely incomprehensible. If it be asked, How the Son comes to be of the same numerical or individual nature with the Father, and yet co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; we must answer, that we cannot tell. Nor is it any just objection against the eternal generation of the Son that we cannot understand the manner nor find out the reason of it; for the finite mind can have no positive conception but of finite things; being absolutely incapable of fathoming what is infinite. Nor does it follow that it is unprofitable to seek the knowledge of this mystery; because a true knowledge of what God hath revealed concerning it is attainable and necessary to our salvation; necessary to our preservation from soul-ruining errors with regard to the Person of our Redeemer.

That Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the sense now declared, and not, as some assert, by his mediatorial office, is the doctrine of the holy scriptures.

I. The eternal generation of the Lord Christ is plainly asserted in various passages; as in the second Psalm ver. 7. *I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son: This day have I begotten thee.* Here God the Father himself condescends to tell us upon what ground Christ is his Son; and assures us, that it is not on the ground of his mediatory office, but on that of his eternal generation. It cannot be

pretended, that the Father's *begetting the Son* signifies appointing him to an office; it is evident, that the phrase will not bear such a construction. Nor can it be understood of his birth of the Virgin Mary, in which he became the Son of man, not the Son of God; or of his resurrection, though the apostle in Acts xiii. 33. in speaking of his resurrection, quotes this text, because by his resurrection he was *declared to be the Son of God*, Rom. i. 4. But neither in his birth nor in his resurrection did he *become* the Son of God: for it is plain from the 12th verse of this Psalm, that it was the duty of all in David's time to *kiss the Son*, to worship him as then the Son of God; his Son who had been begotten from eternity. As with God there is neither yesterday nor to-morrow; but a perpetual present day; So the expression *this day*, is fitly used to signify, that the generation of the Son was from all eternity. It is true, God says, *I will declare the decree:* But the generation of Son is not the matter or effect of that decree, for that is inconsistent with the literal meaning of the words, which plainly respects the present time, and from which we are not to depart without necessity. On the contrary, this generation is manifestly the foundation of that decree, the matter of which is set forth in the next two verses; for unless Christ had been the true and eternal Son of God, he could never have been appointed to be our Mediator or to obtain the kingdom of grace which belongs to him as such.

Another passage to this purpose is that in Prov. viii. 24, 25. *When there were no depths I was brought forth: Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.* Wisdom, as applied to God, signifies an essential attribute of his nature: but here, as in many other places, the abstract is put for the concrete, or wisdom for him who is possessed of it. To understand it of an attribute in the abstract would be quite inconsistent with the context. It cannot be said of the attribute of wisdom, that it was *brought forth* or *set up from everlasting;* that it was from everlasting *by the Lord as one brought up with him.* The more we consider the whole context, we will be the more satisfied,

that the party speaking is a person; and that this person is no other than the Lord Christ. As this wisdom was *by the Lord* when *he gave the sea his decree*, when *he appointed the foundations of the earth*; so *the Word was in the beginning, and was with God*, John i. 1. As this wisdom was the *delight* of the Father; so Christ is his beloved Son, Matth. iii. 17. As this wisdom *was set up* or *anointed* from everlasting; so the Son was foreordained to the office of Mediator before the foundation of the world, 1 Peter i. 20. As this wisdom was *brought forth before the hills*; so Christ was *before all things*, Coloss. i. 17. As by this wisdom *kings reign*; so Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. As this wisdom calls men to repentance both immediately by herself and by her maidens; Christ did so both in his personal ministry and by his apostles and other ministers. Christ is also called Wisdom in the New Testament, Luke vii. 35. xi. 49. 1 Corinth. i. 24. But no one, who allows the Lord Christ to be the party speaking here, can rationally deny that the expressions in the 24th and 25th verses are to be understood of his eternal generation. The word *brought forth* is the very same in the original, which David uses to express his own generation, Psal. li. 5. A very different expression, *I was set up* or *anointed*, ver. 23. is used to express the eternal appointment of the Son to be our Mediator.

We have also a remarkable passage to this purpose in Micah v. 2. *Out of thee*, that is, out of Bethlehem, *shall he come forth to me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.* This passage is an illustrious prophecy of Christ expressly applied to him in the New Testament, Matth. ii. 6. Here is *a going forth* from everlasting, distinct from another *going forth* in time. As the going forth in time is to be understood of one sort of generation, which was to belong to him as man; so the *going forth from of old, from everlasting*, is to be understood of another sort of generation which had belonged to him as the second Person of the adorable Trinity from eternity. *Goings forth* are mentioned in the

plural number to represent the incomprehensible perfection of this eternal generation; just as *blessedness* is used in the 1st v. of the 1st Psalm, in the original Hebrew, to denote the perfection of that blessedness which is secured to the godly as their portion in Christ. The latter *going forth* cannot be understood of God's decreeing, that Christ should go forth; for the prophet evidently speaks of his going forth itself, and not of any decree about it. By such a gross perversion of language, *the going forth* or actual existence of all things might be said to be from eternity, because they were eternally decreed.

II. This truth appears from those texts which represent Christ as the only begotten Son of God, John 1. 14. *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.* See also John iii. 16. 18. 1. John iv. 9. Others are called sons of God, as the angels on account of their creation after the image of God, Job xxxviii. 7. believers on account of their adoption, John i. 12. magistrates on account of their office as bearing some shadow or resemblance of God's dominion over the creatures, Psal. lxxxii. 6. Now if Christ were the Son of God by creation, by adoption, or by appointment to an office; or if he were begotten of the Father in any of these senses, then he would not be the only begotten of the father; because, upon this supposition, there are others begotten of him in the same way. Thus, it appears that it is vain for the opposers of our doctrine to say, that Christ is the only Mediator; for what is here represented as making the Sonship of Christ peculiar, is the foundation of it, or the personal property of his being begotten of the Father. Christ's being the Son of God upon the ground of the call and appointment of God to an office (it makes no difference whether the office be more or less important) would not be peculiar to himself. Magistrates are called the children of the most High upon this ground. Aaron also might have been called the Son of God upon this ground. And therefore something else must be meant by that *begetting*, which is a ground of Christ's sonship peculiar to himself: which is such that it would be horrid blasphemy to say, that any creature

was in any degree or in any respect, begotten of the Father in the same sense. Though the Son's being begotten of the Father be an incomprehensible mystery, yet one thing is certain from Divine revelation, which is, that it necessarily carries in it, the Son's possessing the same individual Godhead or Divine nature with the Father. In this respect, he is the *only begotten Son of God;* and also *his own*, or *his proper Son*, as he is called in Rom. viii 32. and God is called *his own Father*, his *proper Father*, John v. 18. If Christ's Sonship were founded in his Mediatory office, then he would be the Son of God in a metaphorical or figurative sense, not, as the texts now quoted import, in a strict and proper sense.

III. This truth appears from these texts which represent the sending of Christ to be our Saviour as the greatest demonstration that ever was given of the love of God to mankind, in this respect, that the Person sent was his *only begotten Son, his own, his proper Son*, John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 32. The force or emphasis of this representation is, in a great measure, if not entirely destroyed, when we understand the mediatory office of Christ as founding or constituting his Sonship. According to this opinion, he is the Son of God, because he was sent as our Mediator: whereas it is evidently the sense of these texts, that he was sent as our Mediator, because he was the Son of God; and consequently the only fit Person for that wonderful office. Nay, this opinion would reduce some texts, pregnant with heavenly instruction, to something little better than tautology. Thus when it is said, in John iv. 14. *The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* These words according to this opinion, would mean, that the Father sent the Saviour to be the Saviour, or the Mediator to be the Mediator; for the character of Christ as a Mediator includes his character as a Saviour; and therefore there can be nothing in the latter but what is in the former

IV. Christ is also called the Son, where there appears to be no reference to his Mediatory office, as in Prov. xxx. 4. *Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who*

hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell? God who is the supreme Governour of all nature, the only true God is here represented as having a Son, whose Sonship, name and glory are incomprehensible.

V. The title Son of God is continually distinguished from such titles as Jesus Christ. the sent of God, High Priest, &c. signifying his Mediatory office, Matth. xvi. 16. *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Acts viii. 37. John vii. 29. *I am from him*, as his eternal Son; *and he hath sent me*, in the character of Mediator. John viii. 42. The apostle, in Heb. v. 5, 6. opposes the character of Christ as a Son to that of a servant in prefering him to Moses, saying, *Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant; but Christ as a Son over his own house.* If by *Son* here we understand the office of Mediator, we destroy the opposition: for, as Mediator, Christ was the Father's servant Isai. xlii. 1. The same observation holds with regard to the opposition implied in Heb. v. 8. For to suppose his being the Son denotes only his being the Messiah, whose office it was to suffer and die for sinners: would make the apostle say, though it was his work to learn obedience by sufferings, yet he learned obedience by sufferings. He was made Lord and Christ, Act. ii. 16. He was made an High Priest, Heb. vii. 16, 28. But he is never said to be made the Son of God.

VI. This truth appears from Matth. xxviii. 19. and 1 John v. 7. Father and Son are correlates; and if the second Person was not a Son previous to the Mediatory office; neither was the first Person a Father previous to it: if the one be not the eternal Son, neither is the other the eternal Father. "These glorious persons," as one observes, "are distinguished from each other by personal characters, by personal properties and relations. "But if there be no *Father* and *Son* in the Trinity, "there can be no such distinctions. And if all personal "distinctions be lost, a Trinity of persons must be given "up with, or it must land in the distinction of three "Divine Beings,—three Gods."

See a view of the Covenant of Grace by Mr. Gib.

The following observation was intended to be added to the Latin quotation from Turretine in pages 255 and 256.

If man's inability to do what is spiritually good were only moral in the sense now explained, then we might admit the Pelagian opinion, that no other cause is necessary to saving conversion than moral suasion. The Arminian scheme is, at bottom, much the same with the Pelagian: for whatever internal work of the Spirit they acknowledge, they still insist that it has no other effect, with regard to the will, than that of persuasion; the will, according to them, having sufficient ability to choose what is spiritually good. Nay, some professed Calvinists, such as John Cameron, who taught divinity at Saumur in France in the first part of the 17th century, and his followers, seem to have gone into the same opinion. For, though they allow the work of the Spirit to be always victorious in the case of the elect, yet they ascribe the whole success of it to a high degree of moral suasion. But the Reformers in the 16th century, and such as adhere to their doctrine, acquiescing in the simplicity of the scripture on this head, maintained, that, in order to conversion a real creation is necessary, though not of the substance of the soul, yet of those gracious habits and dispositions, without which it is as incapable of acts spiritually good, as a dead body is of performing the actions of a living man. This new creation extends to all the faculties of the soul, on account of the total corruption of our nature. Such is the doctrine of the tenth of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is, "that he cannot turn or prepare himself, by his own natural "strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. "Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and "acceptable to God,—without the grace of God by Christ pre-"venting us, that we may have a good will,—and working with "us, when we have that good will." To the same purpose in the ninth chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is declared, that "Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly "lost LAL ABILITYOF WILL to any spiritual good accompa-"nying salvation: so as a natural man, being altogether averse "from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength, "to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

☞ Among many instances, which might be given, of the truth of the remark at the foot of page 12, the following testimony of Mr. William Cowper, the author of *The Task* and other celebrated poetical compositions, is here added, as recent and striking. It is taken from some Letters published in the account of his life by Mr. Hayley, vol. 1st, p. 52, 60, 62

"I think Mr. Hervey one of the most scriptural writers in the world."

* Marshal is an old acquaintance of mine; I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness; that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his Spirit; that corrupt and wretched in ourselves, in Him, and in *Him only*, we are complete; that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid and eternal interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father, and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in grace, and its consummation in glory, is given, freely *given* to us of God; in short, that he hath opened the kingdom of heaven *to all believers*. These are the truths, which, by the grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself; shall ever be placed next my heart as the throne whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its motions, and reduce that world of iniquity and rebellion to a state of filial and affectionate obedience to the will of the most Holy.

"These, my dear cousin, are the truths to which by nature we are enemies—they debase the sinner, and exalt the Saviour to a degree which the pride of our hearts (till almighty grace subdues them) is determined never to allow. May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts continually more and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ."

"I think Marshal one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings upon those parts of our most holy religion, which are generally least understood (even by real Christians) as master-pieces of the kind. His section upon the union of the soul with Christ, is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth with admirable perspicuity, and with great good-sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith.

"I subjoin thus much upon that author, because though you desired my opinion of him, I remember that in my last, I rather left you to find it out by inference, than expressed it as I ought to have done. I never met with a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it."

To this testimony the following extract from p. 179 of the 2d vol. of Mr. Hayley's work, adds weight.—"Few ministers of the gospel have searched the scripture more diligently than Cowper; and in his days of health, with a happier effect; for a spirit of evangelical kindness and purity pervaded the whole tenor of his language and all the conduct of his life."

END OF THE LETTERS.

THE

STONE ROLLED AWAY;

OR

THE HAPPY ISSUE

OF THE

BELIEVER'S EXERCISE

ABOUT HIS DIFFICULTIES;

A Sermon,

PREACHED BEFORE THE CELEBRATION

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

By the Rev. JOHN ANDERSON.

Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.

John xii. 40.

PITTSBURGH,

FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL AND LITERARY PRESS OF ZADOK CRAMER.

.....

1806.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS discourse was delivered several years ago on Saturday before the celebration of the Lord's supper, in Chartiers. Some Christian friends expressed a desire of its publication. It is added here as, in some measure, a practical improvement of the doctrine vindicated in the preceding letters.

THE

STONE ROLLED AWAY, &c.

MARK XVI. 3, 4.

And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? and when they looked, they saw, that the stone was rolled away; for it was very great.

THE diligence of these women in seeking Jesus, was undoubtedly a pattern for our imitation. No doubt, the circumstance of the women's inquiry about the stone, which had been rolled to the door of the sepulchre, served to corroborate their testimony concerning our Lord's resurrection; as it shews that in this matter, they had no collusion with others; since they would have had no occasion for their anxiety; if they had known it as a matter agreed on, that the stone would be rolled away by the disciples or some others. But what we have in view at present, is their anxious concern, and exercise, about the difficulty of getting the stone rolled away, and the happy issue of their coming to the sepulchre in finding it removed. These particulars bear a manifest analogy or resemblance to the experience of those who are sincerely seeking the Lord Jesus in his ordinances. Therefore, we take occasion from the words now read, to offer the two following observations.

1st. True Christians are distinguished by their exercise about the bars in the way of their attaining communion with Christ.

2dly. While Christians are sincerely essaying to go forward in the path of duty, they find their difficulties gradually removed; "*And when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away.*"

In discoursing on the first of these observations; it is proposed, through divine aid, to point out,

1st. Some of these bars in the way of our attaining communion with Christ. 2d. Some of the distinguishing exercises of the Lord's people about such bars.

We are first to point out some of the bars to our attaining communion with Christ.

The first and great bar is the natural enmity of our heart against God and his revealed will. Rom. viii. 7. "*The carnal mind*," or as some render it "the wisdom of the flesh, *is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God nor indeed can be.*" This enmity in unrenewed men is like a great stone or dead weight, that keeps them from any real or sincere compliance, with the Lord's call or commands. If they seem to comply on some selfish or carnal account, their compliance is partial; some part of the Lord's command being wilfully neglected. Such was the compliance of Saul with the divine command about the destruction of the Amalekites; whilst in contempt of that command he spared Agag. This enmity renders unrenewed men utterly impotent, and incapable of making any acceptable approach unto God. The remainders of this enmity in believers, are a great bar, or hindrance to their honest endeavours in seeking and serving him. Hereby they often find that they *cannot do the things that they would.* On account of this enmity, therefore, they may well cry out "*Who shall roll us away the stone.*"

2. Ignorance is another great bar to our attainment of communion with Christ. Eccl. x. 15. "*The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go up to the city.*" Sometimes persons are ignorant of the matter of their duty, or prejudiced against it; as Paul was before his conversion, with respect to the duty of confessing Christ. But many a poor soul has some knowledge of the matter of his duty, while he is in absolute darkness as to the right manner of performing it; that is, in the way of a single dependence on the righteousness of Christ for acceptance, and the strength of Christ for the performance. "*He knoweth not how to go to the city.*" This

darkness so far as it prevails in the Lord's people; is a great bar to their progress in his way, and a continual grief of heart to them. With regard to which they are still saying, *Who shall roll us away the stone?*

3. Unbelief is another great bar to our attainment of communion with Christ. He is set forth to us in the gospel as made of God into us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Unbelief holds him to be utterly unfit to answer these purposes. Unbelief treats the record of God concerning his Son, and concerning eternal life for us in him, as a cunningly devised fable; as a thing no way to be depended on for eternity. Unbelief shuts men up under their natural incapacity of any good thought, word or work; and so far as it prevails in the Lord's people, it incapacitates them for spiritual exercises; particularly, for partaking of the Lord's Supper, which will be unprofitable without that faith by which we feed upon Christ crucified; and therefore so far as it prevails, in the Lord's people, they will say concerning it: *Who shall roll us away the stone?*

4. Attachment to the world and the things of it, is a great bar to the attainment of communion with Christ in his ordinances. Many decline waiting on God in his ordinances, when they find, that the profits, pleasures or honours of this world are not to be had in that way. The case of such is represented in the parable of the Supper, Luke xiv. 17. *He sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden come, for all things are now ready; And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground and I must need go and see it, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.* With regard to worldly honour, we see how it hindered the Jews from believing in, and confessing Christ, John v. 44. *How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only.* John xii. 42, 43. *Among the chief rulers many believed on him*

—*but they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* There can be no sincere waiting on God where the love of the world has the dominion: for says the apostle, *Whoso loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* The world is the element of natural men; and therefore they delight in their inordinate attachment to it; but the remainder of that attachment in the Lord's people is their grief and burden; and as it is a principal hinderance to their exercise in seeking communion with Christ, they are still saying concerning this evil, *Who shall roll us away the stone?*

5. Another great bar to the attainment of comfortable communion with Christ, is a sense of guilt, and prevailing apprehensions of God's wrath. Men are naturally under the dominion of the guilt of sin. While the time of God's forbearance and of the outward favours of his providence continues, they usually get the thoughts of it diverted and their consciences kept quiet by the opinion of their own righteousness, and of the general mercy of God. And though the native tendency of the truths which God has revealed in his word, be to break this false peace or quiet under the guilt of sin; yet the speculative or mere head knowledge and the outward profession of these truths, are often abused to the promoting of this cursed and fatal delusion. To the same purpose natural men make use of duties, church privileges, good meanings and resolutions, legal convictions and sorrows. But when the Lord is pleased to make them feel the power and spirituality of his law in their consciences; all these schemes prove but mere cobwebs; they are soon swept away; their hope is then found to be as *the giving up of the ghost;* it ends, if sovereign mercy prevent not, in utter despair; as we see in the cases of Cain, and Judas. Oh, it is dangerous to hate convictions and awakenings of conscience. Those who do so, who cannot bear to have their sin and misery discovered to their conscience, have reason to fear; that, in a little, it will be awfully discovered, to their eternal confusion. As to the Lord's people, they have got their hearts reconciled to conviction. They are willing to have the worst of their case disco-

vered to them by the word and Spirit of God. They have seen the vanity of all other ways of relief from the guilt of sin, than that of the application of the blood of Jesus Christ. When they are enabled to the lively exercise of faith in his blood as that which cleanseth them from all sin; their consciences have a sweet and solid rest. In this divinely precious blood, they see the Lord's anger turned away from them; they see him *pacified towards them for all that they have done.*

But this faith is never without a conflict. There is still remaining unbelief, which often sadly prevails and deprives them of sensible comfort. In which case, they are filled with apprehensions of God's anger on account of former iniquities, and feel much backwardness to the exercise of drawing near to God. Their sense of guilt is so great as to make them ready to cry out with Peter, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* They have a real knowledge that relief is to be had only by the blood of Christ: but their views of it are darkened by prevailing unbelief and other corruptions. So that nothing appears to sense; but great and crimsoned coloured guilt: the sight of which makes their knees feeble and their hands hang down. They look upon their guilt as the greatest in the world, and they are saying, How shall we come to experience the benefit of the blood of Christ, in taking it away? *Who shall roll us away the stone?*

6. Another bar to the attainment of communion with Christ in his ordinances, particularly in the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is the difficulty of the right observation of it; the great danger of unworthy communicating. Those that rest in a form of godliness, find little difficulty in this or any other duty: they have their end, which is to get their consciences kept quiet by going the round of duties. The right manner of performing them in the sight of God, gives natural men little or no concern. But it is far otherwise with true Christians. They see, that, while they perform duties, in a carnal, unbelieving manner, they do so to the dishonour of God and to the wounding, and hurt of their own souls. They see, that they must have faith ex-

ercised on the Lord Jesus as their righteousness and strength; they must have a supreme love to him; they must have gospel repentance, a broken and a contrite heart; they must not only have no particular prejudice or grudge against their brother; but they must have a real and hearty concern for his temporal and spiritual welfare, as for their own. They must have a cordial delight in the saints as belonging to Christ and bearing his image; they must have sanctuary preparation, for they are to *seek the Lord after the due order. Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.* They see that, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, they must have a real discerning of his body as the proper and life-giving food of their souls, which is a spiritual and supernatural attainment; otherwise they would be chargeable with the dreadful crime of unworthy communicating, and they would be really guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, as his crucifiers were in the days of his flesh. When the Lord's people thus consider the difficulty of the duty to which they are called; and the danger of mismanaging it, they will be under great and anxious concern, making them cry out, *Who shall roll us away the stone?*

7. Another bar in the way of communion with Christ in the ordinances of the Lords supper is the fear, that, if they should go forward to his holy table, and afterwards be so overcome by some corruptions or temptation as to prove a reproach to their holy profession it would be better that they had not engaged in such a solemn exercise. There is indeed a numerous generation of church members who have no such fear, but a great deal of confidence in their own wisdom and resolution, in their own righteousness, and in the manifold privileges and advantages they possess; so that they cannot see themselves to be in any danger; and yet it is often from this self-confident generation that religion receives its deepest wounds. But the Lord's people know by the word of God and by experience; that the heart is deceitful above all things, and that they are surrounded with snares that are spread for them by satan and the world. Hence they see themselves to be in

continual hazard of falling. This fear is indeed owing to the weakness of their faith. The language of which is, that the Lord Christ is their keeper; that with him they are in safety. But then there is as great a difficulty in believing this, as there would be in believing that a bush we saw in the midst of the flames would be quite safe; and not a twig of it hurt. Thus, the sense, which the Lord's people have, of their danger from inward corruption and outward temptation, fills them with deep concern, causing them to say, *Who shall roll us away the stone?*

8. It is a great and terrible difficulty in the way of some of the Lord's people who are essaying to make a solemn approach to him in his ordinances, that they are assaulted with horrible suggestions of Satan. For that adversary, besides the deep hand he has in aggravating the difficulties already mentioned, is sometimes permitted, to cast multitudes of fiery darts, and astonishing blasphemies into the souls of the Lord's people. Alas! say such poor souls, pressed with these onsets of the Devil, we can hardly get a composed thought: such and such a horrid temptation or suggestion continues to be so violently pressed upon us. How can we go forward in the solemn duties of religion, while we are in such a distracted case. *Who shall roll us away the stone? Who shall turn the storm into a calm?*

Having pointed out some of the bars, which appear in the way of the Lord's people that are seeking communion with him in solemn ordinances; we may now proceed to shew what is their duty and exercise about such bars.

1st. The Lord's people are distinguished from others by the humbling sense they have of the bars in the way of their attaining the enjoyment of communion with Christ. They are much conversant with their own hearts; they are concerned to examine and to know themselve. Hence they have an humbling sense of their natural enmity, ignorance, unbelief, inordinate attachment to the world, and of their danger from temptation; they are much exercised in considering their

ways, the nature, multitude and aggravations of their sins. Hence they know what it is to be in soul-distress about the guilt of sin. When they are called to any duty they are concerned to understand the nature and importance of it; hence they have a heart affecting sense of the difficulties attending it.

Secondly, the Lord's people are convinced, that it is necessary in order to their acceptable approach to God in his ordinances, that they have a sure and well grounded persuasion that their difficulties shall be removed in due time; that these stones shall be rolled away. How can they set forward in the Lord's way, while they see no solid ground to believe that he will deliver them from all their guilt, their heart enmity, their ignorance, unbelief, inordinate affection to the world. How can they set forward, unless they see ground to believe that the Lord will afford them strength to carry them through all trials, and that he will bruise satan under their feet shortly?

If it be asked,—Where they are to see a good and solid ground for this persuasion: that he will roll away these stones, that is, remove the bars to the enjoyment of communion with Christ? We answer in Christ himself, as he is exhibited in the word of the gospel. You cannot have any right or suitable view of his person, offices, names and relations as set forth to you in that word, but you must see a solid ground to rely on for the removal of all these bars? For example: Are you oppressed with a sense of guilt? are you under apprehensions of the divine wrath? Look to the priestly office of Christ and there you will see God not imputing any of your trespasses to you; they having been all imputed to Christ; and law and justice having got full satisfaction for them all in him; for, as the church says; *The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.* Are you distressed on account of ignorance? On account of your ignorance of the righteousness of Christ, of the grace of Christ, of the right way of coming to God by him? Then look to his prophetical office; and there you will see a solid ground to believe that he will open the blind eyes, that he will reveal his blood and righteousness to you by his

word and Spirit, that he will reveal to you the fulness of his grace, that he will *instruct thee and teach thee the way that thou shalt go, that he will guide thee with his eye*. You see you have no wisdom of your own, then rejoice in Christ Jesus as made of God into you wisdom. Do you find your natural enmity against God and the things of God to be very strong and deeply rooted; Can you see nothing but unbelief and distrust of God and of his promised salvation in your souls? Even in this deplorable case, you have good and solid ground to believe, that he will subdue the enmity and rebellion of your hearts; that he will fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power. O, sirs, you cannot look to the offices of Christ as set forth to you in the glorious gospel; but you must see ground to believe that he will remove all your difficulties. Look to his names: he is JESUS a Saviour, JEHOVAH TZIDKENN, the Lord our righteousness, JEHOVAH ROPHI, the Lord that healeth thee, JEHOVAH SIREH, the Lord who will see and provide; JEHOVAH SHALOM, the Lord our peace; JEHOVAH NISSI, that is, the Lord my banner; JEHOVAH SHAMMA, the Lord is there. Look to his relations: he is our friend, our elder brother, our everlasting father, our husband, our head. Does not the import of these wonderful names, and endearing relations, secure the rolling away of every stone; the removal of every bar, that stands in the way of your attaining communion with God? Besides, in the believing contemplation of Christ crucified, we may see that the great stone of God's vindictive wrath is already rolled away; a work which cost the Son of God a long and ignominious course of service and suffering, till he poured out his soul unto death. And now since this stone is rolled away, the removal of all the other stones; such as the power of sin, the opposition of the world, and the tyranny of the Devil, is of course infallibly sure. Has he done the greater and will he not do the less?

Again, the Lord's people see good and sufficient ground in the great and precious promises of the gospel to believe, that he will remove these difficulties,

that he will roll away the stones. These promises are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus; you are to look for the accomplishment of them in him and for his sake: Behold, therefore, solid ground, in the promise of pardon, to believe the removal of the guilt of your sin, Isai. xliii. 25. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins:*—See ground in the promise of the new heart, to believe the removal of your heart enmity, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:* Deut. xxx. 6. *And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul:*—See ground in the promise of divine teaching and illumination, to believe your deliverance from ignorance and spiritual darkness, Isai. xlviii. 17. *Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee in the way that thou shouldst go:* and John vi. 45. *It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God.*—See ground to believe deliverance from your inordinate attachment to idols, in such a promise as that in Isai. xxx. 22. *Ye shall defile the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth, thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence:*—See ground to believe that strength shall be afforded for carrying you through duty and difficulty, in such a promise as that in Zech. xii. 10. *I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.*—See ground to believe that you shall be overcomers at last, whatever temptations you may meet with, in such promises as these, 1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Gen. xlix. 19. *Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.* Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly.*

If you ask, How may I know that such promises belong to me; or that they will be forthcoming to me

for the removing of my difficulties? We answer, these promises are an essential part of that gospel, which we are commanded to preach to every creature. They are all comprehended in the gospel promise, which is directed to you, Acts ii. 39. *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* Believe, therefore, and doubt not that the promise belongs to you; in such a manner as to warrant a present application of it to yourself: and unless you put it away from you; and count the word of God, who cannot lie, unworthy to be depended on, unworthy of credit, these promises will undoubtedly be forthcoming to you. We would only remind you of two things. One is, that you are to look upon the righteousness of Christ, as the foundation of all the promises, and you are to expect all the good of them no otherwise than in and with him, and for his sake. The other is, that what God has joined together in the promise, ye must beware of putting asunder. For example, God in his promise hath joined together the pardon of sin and the sanctification of the spirit; and you are by no means to expect the one without the other.

Thus, having observed, that true Christians are distinguished from others by their humbling sense of the bars in the way of their attaining communion with God in his ordinances; and that a well grounded persuasion that God, for Christ's sake, will remove these bars, is necessary to an acceptable approach unto God: we go on to observe, In the third place, that experience of the Lord's loving kindness, in removing these bars, is sought by his people in the use of means, particularly, in the use of the word and of prayer. As to the word, it is the glass wherein Christ is to be seen by faith, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord;* in the glass of the word. Here God hath given to us his *exceeding great and precious promises.* As to prayer, it is a special mean of obtaining right views of our difficulties, and of getting our faith in Christ and in the promise exercised and increased. It is a special mean of receiving the Holy Spirit, Luke xi.

13. *If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* They are blessed indeed, whose difficulties bring them to God's throne of grace, where *they obtain mercy and find grace to help them in the time of need;* bring them to wrestle with the angel of the covenant, and to get his blessing. In a word, if we would have comfortable experience of the removal of our difficulties, we are not to neglect any of the means of divine appointment, such as, fasting, the sacraments, covenanting, Prov. viii. 34. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the ports of my doors.*

In the last place, the Lord's people are concerned to wait on him patiently for the removal of their difficulties. Even though they should be as yet, no sensible prospect of the removal of them, they will hope in his word; utterly refusing to go to any other door for relief; Saying with the Disciples, *Lord, to whom shall we go; thou hast the words of eternal life.* They desire and purpose, through grace, to continue in prayer. It is the design of a great part of Christ's word to encourage his people to persevere in this exercise, See particularly, Luke xviii. 1——8.

We now proceed to speak a little on the second proposition, which we laid down, namely, that in setting forward in the Lord's way, at his call, his people often get a comfortable view of the removal of their difficulties: as these women, when they came to the sepulchre, saw, that the stone was rolled away.

Here we may speak, first, of setting forward in the Lord's way at his call, Secondly, of the view that his people get of the removal of their difficulties.

With regard to setting forward in the Lord's way, we observe, that it includes these four things: First, a steady view of the Lord's command as our warrant. His authority ought to be both the rule and the reason of of what we do. To those that ask us why we do such things, we should have it to say, The Lord in his word hath bidden us; and we dare not, and will not neglect them.

Secondly, a steady view of our encouragement in the word of grace and promise.

Thirdly, an humbling sense of difficulties both from within and from without.

Fourthly, a resolution to adhere to the direction of the Lord's command, and to the encouragement of his promise amidst all the sensible difficulties that arise. Christians should say with the Psalmist,

> " Though I in midst of trouble walk,
> " I life from thee shall have :
> " 'Gainst my foes' wrath thou'lt stretch thine hand ;
> " Thy right hand shall me save.
>
> Psal. cxxxviii.

With regard to the experience which the Lord's people have, of their difficulties being removed ; while they are setting forward in his way in obedience to his call, we observe two things. First, it is often the case that when they set forward in any duty in obedience to the Lord's call, and in dependance on his grace, they have a gracious experience of the actual removal of some particular difficulty with which they had been sorely *oppressed*; They found themselves so much distracted by some particular temptation, that they were ready to say, That it was vain for them to attempt such a duty. Yet, in actually setting about it from a regard to God's authority, their fears have been secretly disappointed ; for they have found the temptation in a great measure, if not entirely, removed, as when the children of Israel were in a great strait. On the one side insuperable rocks ; and on the other side and before them, the red sea. While they were in this situation, they were commanded to go forward, and, in doing so, a safe passage was opened to them, by the miraculous recess of the waters of the sea.

The Second thing we observe, is, that, even when the difficulty itself is not sensibly removed, the Christian, in setting forward at the Lord's call, finds such seasonable support afforded, as encourageth him to hold on in his way : So that, even in this case, the stone is in effect rolled away, Thus when Paul was

going forward in the exercise of prayer about a certain temptation of Satan, the temptation itself was not removed; but the Lord gave him a sweet assurance of support and through bearing under it, 2 Corinth. xii. 9. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* This was, upon the matter, a rolling away of the stone: accordingly, he adds, *Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

We conclude with a word of exhortation. Consider deliverance from the guilt and power of sin as your great concern. Unless you get these stones rolled away, you can have no communion with God: you must perish for ever. Concerning this matter we, in the Lord's name offer you the following cautions.

1. Beware of carelessness about the deliverance of your soul from the guilt and power of sin. Careless persons, inattentive to the concerns of their souls, indifferent about the truths revealed and the duties enjoined in God's word, not knowing the plague of their own heart, neglectors of prayer, despisers of Divine ordinances, are manifestly in the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

2. Beware of thinking to roll away the stones by your own wisdom and strength. Jerem. ix. 23. *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But Let him glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth.* Isai. xl. 30. *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail.* 1 Sam. ii. 9. *By strength shall no man prevail.* The gospel way of salvation excludes boasting, and pours contempt on all the glory of man's own wisdom, righteousness, and strength. Here Christ is all, and free grace reigns through his righteousness unto eternal life. Coloss. iii. 11. Rom. v. 21.

3. Beware of the devices of Satan in this matter. One of these devices is, to make you think the guilt

and power of your sins which are the *real* bars to your attainment of communion with God, to be no bars at all, or so trivial, that you yourselves may remove them at any time. O remember, that they are FOOLS, who *make a mock* or make light, *of sin;* and that nothing can take away the guilt of sin but the infinitely precious blood of Christ; and nothing can overcome the power of it but the Almighty operation of the Holy Spirit. Another of his devices, is to make you take up with some false or pretended method of removing these real bars; such as that of trusting in the absolute mercy of God without a Mediator or that of going about to establish your own righteousness, either under the notion of its being formally your justifying righteousness, or under the notion of its being a condition or qualification giving you a right and title to the righteousness wrought out by Immanuel. There are but two ways of justification before God: the one is that of an innocent person on account of his own righteousness: the other is that of a sinner on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. The one is attained by working: the other in the way of an immediate dependance on Him whose name is *the Lord our Righteousness.* A third device of Satan, which we warn you to beware of, is his raising a variety of false bars to prevent you from embracing the only effectual way of getting the real bars to your attainment of true blessedness removed, that is, the way revealed in the glorious gospel. One of these false bars is, that it is folly to think, that believing in Christ, or relying on his promise, is the way to get these difficulties removed, these stones rolled away. Thus Satan made the polite and learned Greeks account the preaching of Christ crucified foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. Another of these false bars is, the difficulty of the Christian life. Satan represents it as impracticable to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and follow Christ. But these false bars vanish, before the light of God's word and Spirit let into the mind and discovering Christ crucified to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto our salvation; discovering Christ's yoke to be easy and his

burden to be light. Cry for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that he may give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in face of Jesus Christ. Ephes. i. 17, 18. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page	Line	For	Read.
12	34	the	their
17	14	Isai. i.	Isai. l.
21	8	Psal. xvi.	Psal. lxii.
24	29	contrary, doubting	contrary doubting;
42	1	the way	in the way
44	20	*off to*	*off, and to*
50	29	the latter,	in the latter,
51	25	Sanctified	Sanctifier
66	23	either of our	either our
68	6 *note*	except	accept
81	11	writing,	writings
82	30	is it	it is
106	22	Marloute's	Marlorate's
122	3	represent	represents
	5 *note*	placabiles	placabilis
123	9	represent	represented
172	18	persons under	persons are under
175	10	casual	causal
176	14, 17, 18	casual	causal
194	6 *note*	Bezu	Beza
	20	them	them ;
196	17	well me	well be
	23	attained	attended
200	3	the sinners	the sinner
217	15	is God	is his own God
232	30	humble	humbled
240	1 *note*	facet	foret

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